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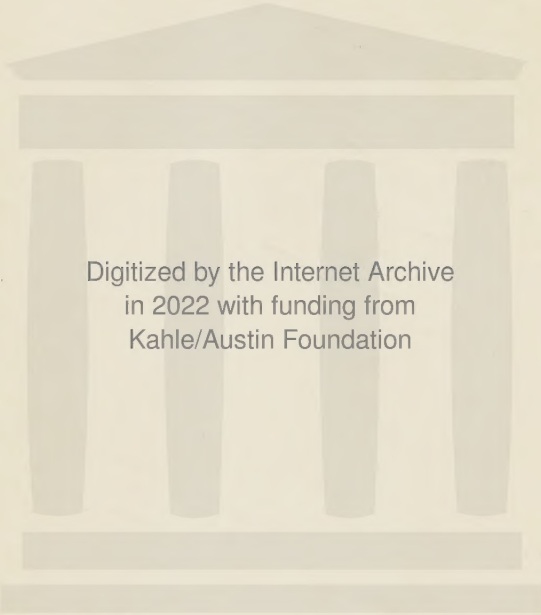
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# A BACHELOR'S HONEYMOON

ORIGINAL FARCICAL COMEDY

REWRITTEN AND REVISED, 1926

BY

JOHN STAPLETON

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"A Bachelor's Honeymoon"

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## CHARACTERS

(In the order in which they appear)

LETTIE LAMB  
SAMPSON BACHELOR  
SETH COFFIN  
COMFORT  
JAMES HOWSON  
MINERVA BACHELOR  
POLLIE  
MOLLIE  
LINDA  
MAUD  
BESSIE  
HECTOR FOURNOY

## SYNOPSIS

ACT I: *Morning, just before lunch time.*

ACT II: *Afternoon, just after luncheon.*

ACT III: *Evening, after dinner.*

The events take place on an island off the Coast of Maine on a pleasant day in June.

"A Bachelor's Honeymoon" was produced at the Madison Square Theatre, New York, with great success.





# A Bachelor's Honeymoon

## ACT I

**DESCRIPTION OF SCENE:** *Main room of the Lodge, a former dwelling converted to a seat for sports and hunting, now little used and left to the caretakers.*

*A double doorway up left, hung with looped portieres, issues to a hallway leading to outdoors. Door at L.2 opens to a bedroom. Below this door, a fireplace of brick with accessories, and a mantel on which stand a bronze clock and a pair of vases. At back, center, a double window with shades in a recess in which is a cushioned window-seat, the recess hung with portieres drawn back, but hanging free. Right of the window a stairway with rail and spindles. Above the third or fourth step, a landing where the stair turns off right to the upper floor. (If necessary, stairway may be omitted, and door used instead.) Up right a double doorway, hung with looped portieres, issues to a hallway leading to the kitchen, supposedly downstairs. This hallway also leads out of doors. At R.2 a door opens to another bedroom.*

*A table with neat cover stands at center of scene. Three chairs stand about the table. Down left center, an upholstered settee with two sofa cushions. Down right center, an up-*

*holstered easy-chair. The polished hardwood floor is laid with a large rug in negative shades. A Navajo blanket hangs over the stair-rail. On the wall hang a pair of crossed fowling-pieces and a game bag. In a corner up left stand a pair of old boat oars with rods and fishing tackle, etc. A wall-pocket is fixed on the side-wall below the stairs in good view of the spectator. Seats and other suitable articles of furniture may be disposed about, at discretion of the stage manager, who, however, must avoid the effect of crowding.*

*The color scheme is bright, cheerful. The view from the window reveals a woodland prospect, pine trees, with a sectional strip of sandy beach.*

DISCOVERED: *As curtain rises, horn of motor heard, then voices in greeting.*

SAMPSON. (Off) Hello, Seth.

SETH. (Off) Mr. Bachelor! How be you?

SAMPSON. Fine! And, Seth, bring in those trunks.

SETH. Right away, sir.

(Enter, doorway up left, LETTIE LAMB in smart traveling suit. She is young, chic, spirited, wholesome. She carries a bunch of roses. She stands surveying the place. Enter rapidly SAMPSON BACHELOR, valise in hand and a daily newspaper of the pink sheet variety. He is about forty, nervous of temperament, human and lovable, but sadly wanting in moral stamina. He wears light summer suit.)

SAMPSON. Like it? (Setting valise with newspaper on the table.)

LETTIE. Oh, it's a love!

(SAMPSON opens his arms. LETTIE goes to him and he gives her a hug. She draws away quickly with warning look. Then SETH COFFIN, wearing jumpers, raw-boned, happy-go-lucky, enters up left, small trunk on his shoulder, a valise in hand.)

SAMPSON. Leave them there for now, Seth. (Pointing toward door R.2.)

SETH. Didn't expect you, Mr. Bachelor. (Setting down valise and trunk just below the door.) Thought you was in the Adirondacks, sir—for your health.

SAMPSON. And that's where I *am*——

SETH. Huh?

SAMPSON. To any *callers*!

SETH. I want to know!

SAMPSON. That's what you're to *tell* them.

SETH. Oh, all right.

SAMPSON. And tell Comfort. Where is she?

SETH. Down in the kitchen. I'll tell her you're here. (Going.)

SAMPSON. And then get in *my* trunk.

SETH. Yes, sir. (Goes by doorway up right.)

LETTIE. (Having put flowers in vase on the mantel, taken off and tossed her hat on settee, now with odd smile) We can't let them know, can we? (SAMPSON gives her interrogative look.) That we're married?

SAMPSON. Lord, no! (Glances apprehensively up right.)

LETTIE. (Quizzically) Well, won't they go—*thinking* things?

SAMPSON. (Bothered for an instant) Oh, we'll manage—somehow. But we've got to keep it a dark

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secret until I get you up in the part you're to play to win Minerva's approval.

LETTIE. Then we'll have to watch our step here.

SAMPSON. Oh, that'll be easy—*here!*

LETTIE. (*Merrily*) Think so?

SAMPSON. Sure! Nobody ever comes here. That's why *we're here*—(*Smiles*)—here by the murmuring sea. (*Rummaging in his bag during this, now brings out a large photograph.*) Ah, here she is, bless her heart! (*Holding it off at arm's length.*) Lettie Lamb—pet of the public!

LETTIE. Pet of the——? (*With derisive smile.*)

SAMPSON. Late purveyor of jollity to the tired business man and the idle rich——

LETTIE. (*Snatches photograph from his hand*) The last company I was with blew up out West, and the public left its pet to hustle for railroad fare home! (*Tosses photograph on the table and laughs merrily.*) Think I'll get my mascots on the job—just for luck!

SAMPSON. Mascots? (*Dog barks sharply near the window.*)

LETTIE. (*In mock alarm*) Callers!

(SAMPSON runs to window and peers off, while LETTIE drops on her knees before trunk, unlocks, searches, tossing out several things, hat, lingerie, a book, etc.)

SAMPSON. No one in sight. (*Coming down, picks up book. Seeing lace-trimmed nightie, picks it up, furtively hugs it, hangs it lovingly over his arm. Reads book title*) "The Bachelor Girl and the Chafing Dish." (*To LETTIE, indicating the book*) Did you learn to cook from this?

LETTIE. In part.

SAMPSON. (*Opens book, reads inscription*) "To



Lettie—with love. ‘Ah-so.’” (*Glares at the book.*)  
Who is—“Ah-so”?

LETTIE. (*Scated on floor, searching in trunk*)  
An old sweetheart.

SAMPSON. “Ah-so?” He sounds like a Chink.

LETTIE. A pet name I gave him. (*Steals look at SAMPSON.*) Jealous?

SAMPSON. (*Showing plainly that he is*) Jealous?  
Me? Tut, tut!

LETTIE. Ah! He was so tender and loving. He  
would sit with me for hours—holding my hand.

SAMPSON. (*In disgust*) For hours? And you  
let him?

LETTIE. (*Demurely*) I was in bed at the time.

SAMPSON. (*Turns and stares at her aghast*) In  
—in what?

LETTIE. Bed.

SAMPSON. Oh-h! (*Letting book and nightie fall  
to floor.*)

LETTIE. And how my heart beat as I hung on his  
words!

SAMPSON. Oh-h!

LETTIE. I felt I could not live without him.

SAMPSON. (*Drops into chair, badly demoralized*)  
I—I’m sorry you told me!

LETTIE. (*Rising to him in amusement and contri-  
tion, two large fancy dolls in her arms*) Oh, you  
old stupid Sammy! I was very ill and—“Ah-so”  
was my physician. (*Rumples his hair.*)

SAMPSON. Oh! Oh, what a jolt you gave me!  
(*Respires in relief, rising, LETTIE laughing softly.*)  
Do you know—I thought that you—

LETTIE. (*Interrupting, reproachfully*) How  
could you think such a thing?

SAMPSON. Oh, these doctors—some of ’em do  
have a snap! Seems to me “Ah-so” mixed an awful  
lot of sentiment with his medicine.

LETTIE. (*Nods*) He asked me to marry him.

SAMPSON. He what?

LETTIE. He said, if I ever left him, he would follow me to the ends of the earth!

SAMPSON. He did?

LETTIE. He did! But he didn't! He disappeared one day—and I haven't seen him since! (*Laughs.*)

SAMPSON. Well, that's the best thing he did!

LETTIE. (*Laughs, indicating dolls*) My mascots! They'll bring us luck. (*Runs up and places dolls on the window-seat.*)

SAMPSON. Sure they will! Oh, I feel as merry as a boy out of school.

(*Capers in sheer joy, cutting a high fling. As LETTIE comes forward, he turns to give her a hug. Same time COMFORT enters, doorway up right. SAMPSON passes LETTIE, innocently swinging his arms, whereat COMFORT eyes him in surprise. She is SETH's wife, prim and proper. Of uncertain age.*)

COMFORT. Excuse me bein' late, Mr. Bachelor. I was busy in the kitchen. (*From the corner of her eye appraising LETTIE, who has taken her hat from settee.*)

SAMPSON. All right, Comfort. Get busy now, and start things moving! (*COMFORT gathers up LETTIE's belongings near the trunk. SETH enters up left, carrying another small trunk which he finds heavy.*) My room. (*Pointing to door L.2.*) Careful, Seth—contains some of my—ah—"cold consomme."

SETH. (*Puzzled*) Huh?

SAMPSON. (*Glances toward COMFORT, then winks, lowering his voice*) Open a bottle and take a pull—tell me how you like it. Here's the key. (*Handing it.*)

SETH. (*Grins, taking key*) Oh—all right. (*Goes off with trunk, finding it not so heavy.*)

SAMPSON. Everything to my room, Comfort. (*Pointing again to door L.2.*)

COMFORT. (*LETTIE'S valise in her hand*) This bag——?

SAMPSON. Yes, that one is Miss—er—— (*Checks himself, suddenly sensible of significance implied.*)

COMFORT. Did you say—Miss?

(*SAMPSON shivers, with look of pain. LETTIE half hides her face behind her hat, peering over it.*)

SAMPSON. (*Getting second wind*) Yes, I said M-Miss! (*COMFORT drops LETTIE'S things as if they'd bitten her.*) And I told you to take her bag to—(*Turns and points to door R.2.*)—that room! (*COMFORT snorts. SETH re-enters. SAMPSON points to door R.2.*) Seth, take in that bag. (*SETH complies, taking along also the articles dropped by COMFORT. LETTIE now moves toward door R.2. SAMPSON, seeing the lace-trimmed nightie on the floor, furtively picks it up with the book, feeling self-conscious and quickly hides the nightie under sofa pillow in corner of settee. LETTIE'S cook book gives him an idea.*) I forgot to tell you, Comfort—Miss Lamb is here to—ah—to cook for me. (*With meaning look at LETTIE, who stifles a laugh and runs off, door R.2.*)

COMFORT. Her? Cook for——?

SAMPSON. (*Quickly*) Oh, just broths and—ah—things I couldn't trouble you to prepare. You know, I'm a sick man, Comfort.

COMFORT. (*With set lips*) M'm! Mr. Bachelor! Ain't Miss Minerva comin' here—nor your daughters——?

SAMPSON. (*Signaling for silence*) Sh! Sh-h! Not a word about—my daughters. Shut that door. (*To SETH as he re-enters*) You see, she got the notion that my daughters are little tots—— (*Indicating height of little ones.*) She seemed to like the notion—and I let her keep it. Don't you see?

COMFORT. Don't know as I do, sir. But don't see 'at it matters if I don't.

SAMPSON. That is perfectly satisfactory. And serve luncheon here.

COMFORT. (*Critically*) For two, sir?

SAMPSON. Cer—Certainly! Cooks eat! (*Exit, door L.2.*)

COMFORT. (*Glances from SAMPSON'S door to LETTIE'S*) There's irreg'lar goin's on here. I thought fust they was married.

SETH. Mebbe they're goin' to be.

COMFORT. Ought to be, you mean! My soul an' body, what would Minerva Bachelor say to this—this house of antiquity? (*Goes off doorway up right.*)

(*SETH, with shake of head, is turning to follow as SAMPSON re-enters.*)

SAMPSON. (*Entering*) Seth, how'd you like the "consomme"?

SETH. (*Grins*) Never tasted a finer brand o' soup! (*Smacks his lips and goes off up right.*)

(*LETTIE re-enters. SAMPSON moves to meet her, extending his arms. LETTIE is running to him as COMFORT re-enters. SAMPSON faces about, going toward his door, and LETTIE continues on up to window and looks off.*)

COMFORT. What would you like for your lunch?



SAMPSON. (*Irritably*) Something to eat! (*Exit COMFORT.*) Had my lips all set for it, too!

LETTIE. (*Laughs softly, coming forward*) Watching your step *isn't* so easy here!

SAMPSON. (*With sour smile*) It's like learning to walk on stilts! (*Re-enter COMFORT with part of luncheon service. She starts to clear the table, taking up SAMPSON'S valise.*) I'll take that. (*Takes valise off to his room.*)

COMFORT. (*Picks up LETTIE'S photograph, tartly*) Where does this belong?

LETTIE. Oh, I'll take that, Comfort. (*Sweetly, taking photograph, looks for place to put it, goes and stands it on the mantel. SAMPSON re-enters.*) See what I found in there. (*Pointing to her door as she produces a photograph, from which she reads an inscription*) "To Aunt Minerva, from her little nieces." Your cunning little baby daughters. (*COMFORT snickers. SAMPSON gives her a warning look.*) Aren't they darling little tots! (*Placing the photograph on the mantel beside her own.*) Oh, how they'd love to have my mascots to play with!

(*COMFORT explodes in laughter which, at a swift look from SAMPSON, she turns into a fit of coughing. She has meantime folded and put the pink newspaper in the wall-pocket and spread the table, laying covers for two.*)

SAMPSON. (*To get her out of hearing*) Comfort, in that room you'll find a bottle of my "cold consomme." I'm sick, you know. (*Exit COMFORT to his room. He places chair at table for LETTIE. Doorbell heard. SAMPSON glances in direction, looking bothered. SETH enters up right. SAMPSON gives him admonitory look. SETH nods and goes by doorway up left.*) Don't want that chap, Howson, nosing in here.

LETTIE. (*Sitting at table*) Oh, he's that friend of Minerva's!

SAMPSON. That's why! I'm afraid he saw us leaving the boat. (*Sits at table.*)

LETTIE. Where are your little daughters now?

SAMPSON. (*Thoughtlessly*) Oh, they're in the country—visiting.

LETTIE. (*Surprised*) Visiting? Those teeny-weeny——?

SAMPSON. (*Quickly interrupting*) Oh—ah—Minerva looks after them.

SETH. (*Re-enters, crossing*) He's gone! I got rid of him.

SAMPSON. Him? Who——?

LETTIE. (*Same time*) Oh, Seth—I wish you'd put my trunk in the room.

SETH. Sure, mum. (*Going to do so.*)

COMFORT. (*Re-entering with bottle*) Here's the only bottle I could find. (*Sets it on table. SETH turns to look.*)

SAMPSON. That's right—that's my "consomme."

COMFORT. Well, it don't taste like soup! (*With flabby smile.*)

(*SETH suppresses a splutter of mirth and goes off with the trunk as COMFORT goes by doorway up right, SAMPSON staring after her.*)

LETTIE. (*Holds bottle up to the light*) Seems she liked the taste!

SAMPSON. (*In surprise*) Did Comfort——?

LETTIE. She did—and a good one! (*Sets down bottle.*)

SAMPSON. And I thought she was dry. (*Pours wine. SETH re-enters and goes by doorway up right.*)

LETTIE. Is Minerva dry?

SAMPSON. Parched!

LETTIE. Well, here's hoping she'll like me—notwithstanding! (*Lifting her cup.*)

SAMPSON. (*Raising his cup*) Success to your hopes! (*They drink.*)

LETTIE. (*Sets down cup*) I'm going to make her like me!

SAMPSON. You will! You made me! (*Setting down his cup, seizes her hand. Barking of dog heard approaching.*) My dog says you will!

(*Drawing LETTIE round the table toward him. She protests with warning gestures toward doorway up right. SAMPSON coaxing, draws her to seat on his knee. He hugs and is about to kiss her as enter running, doorway up left, JAMES HOWSON.*)

HOWSON. Beg pardon! (*Half turns his back.*)

(*LETTIE bounds to her feet with slight scream and runs off doorway up right.*)

SAMPSON. Howson! (*Springing up.*)

(*HOWSON carries himself with a nonchalant, bantering air. He is young and wears smart outing togs.*)

HOWSON. Sorry to intrude, but that dog of yours—! If I hadn't beat him to the door, I wouldn't be quite all here.

SAMPSON. (*Sternly*) Howson, didn't you notice a bell at that door?

HOWSON. (*In quizzical manner*) I did ring! And, though your man lied about you being in the Adirondacks, I was going away, when your dog chased me back. Guess he knew you'd be at home to me. (*With insinuating leer and wink, laying aside*

*his hat.*) Call her back. Got a flash at her on the boat. She's there! She's the berries! Where'd you pick her up?

SAMPSON. (*Inwardly seething*) Howson, you're getting nosey. Now go away before I lose my temper.

HOWSON. (*Smiles*) By the way, I saw Minerva just before I left town. She said nothing about it.

SAMPSON. (*Sharply*) About what?

HOWSON. She'd have told me if you were—married.

SAMPSON. Married!

HOWSON. And if you're not married—why, this lady must be—ah—— (*With insinuating grin.*)

SAMPSON. (*Sharply*) You're wrong! That lady is—— (*Hesitates, then upon impulse*) She's the cook.

HOWSON. Oh, she's the cook. (*Begins to shake with inward mirth.*) Come now, old dear, you don't expect me to swallow *that*—much less her cooking! (*SAMPSON turns away in suppressed rage.*) Where's your sense of humor? Why not call her——? (*About to sit on the arm of the settee, spots the nightie, picks it up, holding it by the shoulders, nodding approval.*)

SAMPSON. Here! That's my night shirt! (*Running, grabs, rolls up and tosses nightie into LETTIE'S room.*)

HOWSON. (*Laughing*) All right, old chap, I won't give you away!

SAMPSON. (*Sharply*) What is there to give away?

HOWSON. (*In irony*) Yes; what? There's no law against a man's wearing lace on his nightie—or hiring a pretty cook. Though cooks are an overbearing lot. Never surprises me to find one of 'em—*sitting* on a man!



SAMPSON. (*Agitated and desperate*) Look here, Howson, if you say a word about this, I'll take you apart—mix you up, and stick you together all wrong!

HOWSON. Oh, far be it from me! Between gentlemen——!

SAMPSON. Sorry you've got to go. (*Handing his hat.*)

HOWSON. All right—I'll blow. (*Laughs, putting on his hat, turning to go. Ominous growl of dog heard.*) Oh, I say—call off that beastly pooch!

SAMPSON. (*Calls off*) Here, Seth! Oh, Seth! Go and leash Bulger. (*SETH re-enters hurriedly.*) This gentleman doesn't know that a barking dog never bites!

HOWSON. I'd like to feel sure that the dog knows that. (*Exit SETH, doorway up left.*) Well, so long, old boy. Hope you enjoy the cook—I mean, the cooking.

(*Goes by doorway up left, leaving SAMPSON staring at the doorway. He walks about to relieve his feelings. Passing the wall-pocket, he plucks out the pink newspaper, sits left of table, trying to compose himself to read. He turns a page, glancing over it restively. Nothing interests him. He is about to toss the paper aside when something in lower half of the sheet catches his eye and he stares at it, uttering a half-stifled cry of alarm. He reads with popping eyes, finishes the article and looks up, stunned, letting the paper fall to the floor. In a moment LETTIE, a plate of doughnuts in hand, reappears in doorway up right, peeping. She wears a bungalow apron.*)

LETTIE. (*Approaching, halts in surprise at SAMPSON's rigid posture*) Taking root? (*SAMPSON appears not to hear. Setting her plate on the table,*

*she playfully raps with her knuckles on his crown.)*

SAMPSON. *(Dolefully)* Nobody home.

LETTIE. Why the vacant upper story?

SAMPSON. Darling, it's all off! Read that. *(Picking up and handing her the newspaper, his finger on the disturbing article.)*

LETTIE. *(Reads the headline)* "Lettie Lamb deserts the stage to marry well-known clubman." *(Hurriedly scanning the article.)* Did they get your name?

SAMPSON. They did! Oh, they did!

LETTIE. *(Taking her eyes from the paper)* It's very queer! Not a line about it in the other papers.

SAMPSON. No, not a line—I've seen them all. But this is certain to reach Minerva. Even if by any miracle it doesn't, that bird Howson'll talk——! In either case, I'm afraid we're done for.

LETTIE. *(In thought, puts newspaper on the table—after slight pause)* Have a doughnut. *(SAMPSON eyes the plate, takes and gnaws one in gloomy dejection. LETTIE takes and offers to bite one, checks herself.)* Tell me, whatever made your late father leave such a darn-fool will?

SAMPSON. The kick of a mule! *(Of a sudden springs up.)* Were you ever kicked by a mule? *(LETTIE, startled, shakes her head vigorously.)* Well, I was! *(Checks an offer to bite, brandishes doughnut.)* I tell you, no man can keep his dignity while receiving the salute of a mule's hind legs!

LETTIE. Was it an accident?

SAMPSON. No, he did it on purpose! *(Checks another offer to bite.)* Kicked by a horse, I'd been a hero. Kicked by a mule—I was a fool. *(Tears in his voice.)* Everybody said so, and it got to father.

LETTIE. And that's why he put your income in Minerva's control?

SAMPSON. (*Nods*) And to deter me from making another runaway marriage.

LETTIE. (*Smiles*) But it didn't deter. You've braved Minerva's anger—to prove your love for me!

SAMPSON. And if you ever saw Minerva in anger, you'd need no other proof!

LETTIE. Have another doughnut. (*Presenting plate.*)

SAMPSON. (*Eyes the plate*) Did you cook them? (*LETTIE nods. SAMPSON takes one, checks an offer to bite and slyly pockets it as LETTIE puts plate on the table and returns.*) But you see, Honey, we've got to announce our marriage, else you won't have a rag of reputation left!

LETTIE. (*With decision*) Sammy! I've never been kicked by a mule, but I've served a term in a New York boarding-house! If you ever had, you'd know just why I don't want another. Now, so long as we keep our marriage a secret, your income's safe.

SAMPSON. But how can we keep it secret after this? (*Indicating newspaper.*)

LETTIE. Deny it! Reporter's mistake. Married in small town—clergyman and witnesses unknown to anyone who knows us—it isn't likely to be uncovered. Now you must keep it dark. Promise me—cross your heart! (*Crossing her own.*)

SAMPSON. All right. Cross my heart. (*Doing so.*)

LETTIE. Right-o! And you let me once get Minerva's number, and—well, I'll bring her to terms.

SAMPSON. (*Dubiously*) Ah, you don't know Minerva! I've seen her in action, and she always gets the decision.

LETTIE. (*Smiles*) Oh, I don't mean to go to the mat with her. There are other ways. Now I'll get my hat and we'll go for a walk. I want the air—

and you need it. (*Turning to go to her room.*)

SAMPSON. But, darling, I can't let you risk your reputation by—— (*Following and catching her in his arms.*)

LETTIE. O—oh—my reputation! (*With precautionary glance around, releasing herself.*) Be careful—or you'll compromise me. (*Turns at the door.*) It's your idea, you know. (*Goes into her room.*)

SAMPSON. (*Stares ruefully at the door*) Wedded—yet no wife! (*Turns away, stops. With emphasis*) D-a-m—damn!

SETH. (*Re-entering up left, stops short*) Meanin' me, sir?

SAMPSON. You've leashed Bulger?

SETH. I done it.

SAMPSON. Well, you turn him loose—if that man shows up here again. He doesn't like dogs!

SETH. I guess they ain't no love lost on neether side.

(*Doorbell heard, sharp, short and imperative, surprising both.*)

SAMPSON. Remember, Seth!

SETH. In the Adirondacks—for your health! (*Going off up left.*)

LETTIE. (*Re-enters, minus the apron, wearing her hat*) Let's go and look at this murmuring sea of yours. (*Going toward doorway up left.*)

SAMPSON. No, this way, dearie—— (*Moving toward doorway up right, same instant COMFORT re-enters with balance of luncheon service, knives, forks, cruets, etc. SAMPSON, fearful that she may have caught the term of endearment, puts on a jaunty manner.*) Going for a walk, Comfort. Miss Lamb wants to see the sea. (*Goes off up right, following LETTIE, COMFORT glaring after them. She takes from the table the pink newspaper and replaces it in*



*the wall-pocket, turning again to table as enter up left MISS MINERVA BACHELOR, followed by POLLIE and MOLLIE. They are followed by SETH carrying their valises. He halts in the doorway, glancing apprehensively about, relieved at not seeing SAMPSON.)*

(MINERVA is the antithesis of her brother, being practical, strong-minded, accustomed to authority, inclined to be abrupt and plain-spoken. She dresses in quiet good taste and has a certain saving grace of refinement. POLLIE and MOLLIE are SAMPSON'S twin daughters, essentially refined, well-bred girls of seventeen. POLLIE'S slang and sporty airs, studiously concealed in presence of MINERVA, are plainly put on, a surface accomplishment recently acquired, which MOLLIE tries sometimes to imitate but with poor success, being romantic, soulful. They are pretty and may dress alike.)

COMFORT. (*Gasps, dropping cutlery on the table*) Well, my soul and body! Miss Minerva!

MINERVA. How d'ye do, Comfort?

POLLIE and MOLLIE. Hello, Comfort!

COMFORT. An' Miss Pollie and Mollie!

MINERVA. You're surprised to see us. (*Moving to centre, COMFORT coming forward on her right. POLLIE and MOLLIE seat themselves decorously in the settee. SETH moves forward back of settee.*) I don't wonder. Well, I'm here for rest and quiet. I'm all run down. (*Finger to lips.*) No one must know I'm here—especially my brother, Sampson! (*COMFORT exchanges furtive glance with SETH, who covertly uplifts his hands in dismay.*) He's in the Adirondacks—sick! If word reached him that I'm here—it would alarm him! (*Looks from COMFORT to SETH.*)

SETH. Ye-ah! (*With emphatic nod of the head,*

then he shoots an anxious glance toward SAMPSON'S door.)

COMFORT. An' Miss Pollie and Mollie——? (*Glancing toward them.*)

POLLIE. (*Drily*) Oh, we're not run down!

MINERVA. No, they're all wound up! (*MOLLIE giggles.*) I brought them along for company—to help me renew my youth. They've been coaxing me to let them have a garden party here, but—— (*With dubious shake of the head.*)

POLLIE. (*Rising and approaching*) Now, Auntie, we won't disturb you a bit!

MOLLIE. (*Rising, anxiously*) Not one bit, Auntie——

MINERVA. Well, see that you don't! Now I want a room—— (*Going toward SAMPSON'S door.*)

SETH. This one hain't in order, mum. (*Putting himself in her way.*)

MINERVA. (*Eyeing him in surprise*) Oh! And why isn't it? (*SETH fidgets, at a loss how to reply.*)

COMFORT. (*Coming to SETH'S rescue, pointing toward the stairs*) The best bedroom's all made up, Miss Minerva—and that 'u'd do for the three o' you.

MINERVA. Well, we'll take that one.

COMFORT. (*Anxious to clinch the arrangement*) Seth, you take them bags right up.

(*SETH runs, gathers up the bags and hurriedly goes upstairs with them.*)

MINERVA. Have Seth get in my trunk when it comes.

COMFORT. Yes, Miss Minerva.

MOLLIE. Now, Auntie, you're tired. You ought to go at once and get some rest.

POLLIE. Yes, I think you ought, Auntie.

MINERVA. (*Giving them the knowing eye*) Is it

my health you're anxious about—or the garden party?

MOLLIE. Oh, Auntie! We——

MINERVA. (*Cutting her short*) There, that will do! (SETH comes rapidly down stairs.) I'm going to lie down for a while. (*Moving toward the stairs, turns.*) In half an hour, Comfort, bring me a pot of tea—make it strong.

COMFORT. Yes, Miss Minerva. (MINERVA goes up stairs, the four looking after her.)

POLLIE. (*Instantly throwing off her air of decorum*) Now, Seth and Comfort—(*Taking an arm of each*)—here's the proposition in a capsule. We've invited the girls and we're going over now to the camp colony to round up the boys.

SETH. (*In alarm*) You're goin' to bring a bunch o' folks here?

POLLIE. Right here! (SETH looks at COMFORT, who then glances toward doorway up right.)

SETH. But your aunt said——

POLLIE. (*Interrupting*) I know! But the thing's done! The party may be on the way here now. We can't meet them at the door and call this little picnic off, can we? No, we can't! (*Crossing to MOLLIE.*) Give me a fagot.

(MOLLIE takes from her handbag a pack of cigarettes. COMFORT looks on in surprise and disgust while POLLIE lights up, affecting the air of a practiced addict. MOLLIE follows her example, but handles her cigarette awkwardly.)

COMFORT. Does Miss Minerva know you smoke them things?

POLLIE. (*Sitting on settee*) Listen, Comfort. What auntie doesn't know won't keep her from renewing her youth here.

MOLLIE. So don't mention it! (*Sitting beside POLLIE.*)

POLLIE. Now, Seth, here's where you come in. We'll need tennis racquets and—well, a tennis court goes with them. You've got the fixings, I believe?

SETH. Yes, Miss.

POLLIE. And set out a few tables and camp stools on the lawn for our lunch.

SETH. All right, Miss.

POLLIE. Comfort, that lets you in for a little extra cooking.

COMFORT. For how many?

POLLIE. Oh, maybe a dozen boys and girls.

COMFORT. (*Staggered*) Well, Miss Pollie, I'll do my best, but——

POLLIE. Oh, we'll make it right with you both. (*To MOLLIE*) We'll have to touch papa—swindle the old dear out of a yard and a half. (*Blows a cloud of smoke, crossing her knees.*)

MOLLIE. That's a hundred and fifty, Comfort! (*Trying to imitate POLLIE's free and easy manner, burns her fingers, dropping the cigarette.*) Ouch!

COMFORT. I declare it's disgustin'! An' you're little more'n children. (*Picking up and throwing cigarette into the fireplace.*)

POLLIE. Oh, I say, Comfort, don't pull that pinafore stuff on us. We've outgrown it.

COMFORT. More's the pity! (*Taking from the mantel their photograph as little tots, placed there by LETTIE.*) You were such dear little things when this picture was taken.

POLLIE. (*With disdainful wave of the hand, rising*) Ancient history! Ancient history! (*COMFORT replaces the picture and turns away with a sigh.*) We're off now to collect the party. (*Flipping her cigarette into the fireplace.*) And, believe me, this is going to be some party! (*Dancing toward*

*the doorway up left, and laughing and giggling, the two run off.)*

COMFORT. They've growed into reg'lar city flappers! (*With shake of the head.*) I don't know what's goin' to happen to 'em.

SETH. What's goin' to happen to *us*? That's what's worryin' me! That pair o' kids gettin' up this jamboree, their aunt here to renew her youth, and——

COMFORT. (*Caustically*) And their father gallivantin' with his "dearie"!

SETH. Dearie?

COMFORT. That's what he calls her!

SETH. An' we're to let on they ain't nary one of 'em here!

COMFORT. (*Distressed*) We can't keep it from Miss Minerva. What on earth air we goin' to do?

SETH. (*Emphatically*) Let matters take their nat'ral course! (*Shouts and laughter heard off announcing the coming of the party. SETH waves his hand in their direction.*) But I guess it's goin' to be some surprise party! (*Going off up right with COMFORT as enter merrily up left, POLLIE, LINDA, MAUD and BESSIE, the latter three pretty girls from the Camp Colony, all in outing dress.*)

LINDA. Too bad about the boys!

POLLIE. Will someone tell me what took them all over to Peak's Island today? (*Bouncing onto the settee.*)

BESSIE. Some company's taking moving pictures there.

MAUD. The boys went over to see the movie queens!

POLLIE. (*In pique*) Movie queens! And what's the matter with the little queens right here? (*With gesture embracing the group.*)

LINDA. (*Merrily*) That's what I say! The only man left was Hector Fournoy.



POLLIE. And he's taking a calico course with Mollie. (*Enter up left MOLLIE and HECTOR FOURNOY, who move across at back to centre, quite engrossed.*) There you see! (*Indicating the lovers. Girls giggle, BESSIE moving to doorway up left.*) Well, I suppose we'll have to make this a hen party! (*Rising. LINDA and MAUD nod dolefully.*)

BESSIE. (*Suddenly pointing off*) Oh, there's a man!

POLLIE. (*Excitedly*) Grab him! Don't let him get away! (*Tearing off after BESSIE, followed by MAUD and LINDA. MOLLIE and HECTOR look after them, amused. HECTOR FOURNOY, a young medical man of French lineage, handsome, rather distinguished-looking, has barely a trace of foreign accent, and falls into verbal tangles only under stress or undue excitement.*)

MOLLIE. (*Admiring LETTIE's fancy dolls, which she has taken from the window-seat*) Aren't they cute? They're quite the thing just now.

HECTOR. Ah, so?

MOLLIE. Oh, yes. (*Replacing the dolls on window-seat and moving forward with HECTOR.*) I wonder where they came from.

HECTOR. I knew a lady who had dolls just like those. She called them her *mascots*.

MOLLIE. Did they bring her luck?

HECTOR. That I do not know.

MOLLIE. (*Archly*) A lady you were—interested in?

HECTOR. (*Hesitates, then frankly*) Yes—interested. (*MOLLIE gives him a quick, uneasy look.*) Not *love*! Though I thought at first it was love.

MOLLIE. Oh——!

HECTOR. Only a great pleasure I found in her company. I have not seen her since I met you.

MOLLIE. (*Smiles, relieved*) I'm so glad you didn't go off with the other men today.

HECTOR. If you are as glad as I am, then——  
(*Hesitates.*)

MOLLIE. (*Thrilled by what she knows is in his thoughts*) Then—what?

HECTOR. Then you are perhaps ready to hear something I have been waiting a chance to tell you?

MOLLIE. (*Ingenuously*) Yes, I—er——! I mean—— (*Confused.*)

HECTOR. (*Takes her hand*) Can you not guess?

MOLLIE. (*Nods her head. Then quickly*) No, I mean—I—— (*Averts her face in smiling confusion.*) Why don't you—tell me?

HECTOR. (*Putting an arm about her*) You know that I love you, Mollie—and I want you—— (*Checks himself with glance toward doorway up left and draws away as HOWSON is rushed on, flanked by POLLIE and LINDA, with MAUD and BESSIE as rear guard.*)

POLLIE and LINDA. (*Pushing him to centre*) Another man! A raw recruit!

HOWSON. But why am I pinched?

POLLIE. Oh, you'll be told!

HECTOR. You and I must play gentlemen in waiting to so many as we can! (*Waving toward the merry girls grouped right of centre.*)

POLLIE. We'll divide you up piecemeal.

HOWSON. Oh, don't divide me! Stretch me!

LINDA. You can be teammate for one of us at tennis.

BESSIE. Bowling partner for another.

MAUD. And match any one you like at golf.

OMNES. That's the idea! Hoot mon! You're elected! etc.

HOWSON. Do I choose the girl—or am I just pulled down?

POLLIE. We'll each take an option on you——

HOWSON. Oh!

POLLIE. Which gives us the *refusal* of you!  
(*Girls giggle.*)

HOWSON. Oh! Well, in that case, suppose I just knock myself down to the highest bidder?

OMNES. Go ahead! Good stuff! Hot dog! etc.

HOWSON. (*In manner of auctioneer*) Here I am going—going! Look me over! A perfect specimen of noble physical manhood—sound of wind and limb! What am I offered for this good thing?

POLLIE. Hasn't he got an awful crust? (*To the girls, who giggle.*)

HOWSON. Put me to any use you like! No home should be without me!

HECTOR. (*In merry derision*) Heaven forbid!  
(*Girls laugh.*)

HOWSON. Come, come! What am I offered?

POLLIE. What'll you take?

HOWSON. I want a place in your heart!

POLLIE. Then you'll have to hustle—there's only a few choice locations left! (*Hilarious laughter, which ceases abruptly as MINERVA appears on the stairs, her face a thundercloud. Other characters all face up scene.*)

MINERVA. (*Coming down the stairs*) What is the meaning of all this racket?

MOLLIE. Oh, auntie, dear, did we disturb you?

MINERVA. You certainly did! (*Coming forward.*)

POLLIE. Of course! How thoughtless of us!

HOWSON. Too bad! You should have told us Miss Minerva was resting.

POLLIE. Auntie, we're very, very sorry!

OMNES. Oh, yes! Very sorry! We sure are!  
etc.

MOLLIE. Auntie, why don't you join our party?

MAUD. Oh, please do, Miss Minerva.

LINDA. We need just you to make it jolly!

MOLLIE. Auntie, it'll help to make you young!

(MINERVA at this looks a bit resentfully at MOLLIE.)

HECTOR. (*Gallantly*) Ah, no! Miss Bachelor is always young.

MINERVA. How like you, Hector Fournoy! You're a true Frenchman. (HECTOR bows.)

MOLLIE. You will join us, Auntie, won't you? (*Under these blandishments the frown has left MINERVA'S face and she seems ready to relent.*)

POLLIE. (*Seizing her hand*) Come and see how smart Seth's making the lawn look!

MINERVA. Well, if you're sure you want an old woman——

OMNES. (*Drowning her words*) Hooray! Come on! Hot stuff! Best ever! etc.

(LINDA, MAUD and BESSIE run off up left with HOWSON and HECTOR, followed by MINERVA, drawn after them by POLLIE and MOLLIE, all chattering merrily. As their voices die away, re-enter rapidly, up right, SAMPSON, followed in leisurely manner by LETTIE.)

SAMPSON. (*Runs to table, glancing eagerly about and under it—turns in consternation*) Gone! The newspaper's gone! (*Sinks into chair left of the table.*) Someone is reading that marriage notice this very minute! Someone has marked it and mailed it to Minerva——

LETTIE. (*During this takes from wall-pocket the pink newspaper, recognizes and hands it to him*) There's your paper.

SAMPSON. (*Seizing it, rising*) Oh, what a relief!

LETTIE. We've kept lunch waiting and Comfort will be sore. I must hurry and get ready. (*Hurrying into her room, closing the door.* SAMPSON tears from the newspaper the page containing the marriage

*announcement, folds and carefully puts it in an inside pocket of his coat.)*

SAMPSON. *(Goes to LETTIE'S door and knocks softly—in cooing voice)* She'll call her Sammy when she's ready for lunch?

LETTIE. *(Heard off, in sing-song)* She will! Ooh—ooh!

SAMPSON. *(Tickled)* Ooh—ooh! *(Crosses, singing softly)* "I'm waiting, my darling, for thee. I'm wait——" *(Breaks off to turn and call)* Ooh—ooh!

LETTIE. *(As before)* Ooh—ooh!

SAMPSON. *(Finishing the strain as he goes into his room)*—"Waiting, my darling, for thee." *(Closing the door. Same time re-enter MINERVA, doorway up left, followed by POLLIE and MOLLIE.)*

MINERVA. *(Entering)* Luncheon on the lawn! Do you expect Comfort to cook for all those people?

MOLLIE. We girls'll all help her.

MINERVA. What do you know about cooking? You'd only be in the way. No, you'll have to find a cook to assist Comfort.

POLLIE. Oh, I'll get Linda to borrow a cook, from the camp.

MINERVA. Yes, do. By the way, have you heard from your father lately? *(Sitting in the easy-chair.)*

POLLIE. *(Shakes her head, sitting on settee)* No, Auntie.

MOLLIE. *(Surprised, sitting beside POLLIE)* Haven't you, Auntie?

MINERVA. Not a word for some time. I'm bothered about it.

MOLLIE. *(Troubled)* What can be the reason we don't hear from him!

SAMPSON. *(Heard off, singing)* "I'm waiting, my darling, for thee!" *(All start and, at finish of strain, look toward SAMPSON'S room.)*



MINERVA. (*Grimly, with nod of head*) Well, we've heard from him!

SAMPSON. (*Off, calls*) Ooh—ooh! (*All look at door again.*)

LETTIE. (*Off, answering*) Ooh—ooh! (*The three rise and look in astonishment at LETTIE'S door.*)

MINERVA. (*With meaning nod of head*) Ah—ha!

MOLLIE. (*Pointing to LETTIE'S door*) What was that?

MINERVA. (*After swift glance from LETTIE'S to SAMPSON'S door*) Come! Quick! (*Hurries into window recess at back, followed by the girls.*)

SAMPSON. (*Entering jauntily, a bottle of "con-somme" in hand*) "I'm waiting—yes, waiting! Yes, wait——" (*Pausing to set bottle on the table, then going toward LETTIE'S door.*) —"waiting, my darling, for——"

POLLIE and MOLLIE. (*Break from MINERVA'S restraining hands and run down*) Hello, Papa!

SAMPSON. (*Whirls, with startled cry*) Oh, my God!

MOLLIE. Why, Papa! We thought you were in the Adirondacks.

POLLIE. What are you doing here, Papa?

SAMPSON. And what are you two doing here?

LETTIE. (*Off*) Ooh—ooh! (*SAMPSON shivers.*)

POLLIE. (*Pointing*) What is that?

SAMPSON. That? That is——! Now you turn around and go straight back to your uncle's farm!

MOLLIE. Oh, Papa! We're going to have a garden party.

SAMPSON. (*Perturbed*) A garden——! No matter, I'll pack the party off with you!

POLLIE. (*Smiling with shake of head*) We want to know what that means, Papa! (*Pointing to LETTIE'S door.*)

SAMPSON. Oh, that?

MOLLIE. We heard your "Ooh—ooh"—and then we heard the answer there! (*Pointing.*)

SAMPSON. Naturally you heard it there—naturally!

POLLIE. Why—naturally?

SAMPSON. Because what you heard there—(*Pointing to LETTIE'S door*)—was merely an *echo*—the echo of my voice there! (*Pointing to his door.*)

POLLIE. How cunning! (*Winks at MOLLIE—then slily*) Let's see if *we* can make the echo!

SAMPSON. No, no, no!

POLLIE. Why not?

SAMPSON. Well—it may not always—*echo*! (*Eyeing LETTIE'S door uneasily.*)

POLLIE. But why not?

SAMPSON. Why not? Why—— (*In smiling compassion*) There are echoes and—*echoes*! (*Indicating LETTIE'S door*) This one belongs in the latter class.

MOLLIE. *You* do it, Papa!

SAMPSON. No! (*Then with an idea*) Well, I will—and then you must run right off to your garden party.

MOLLIE. All right! Now do it.

SAMPSON. (*Clears his throat, nervously*) Ooh—ooh! (*Long pause. MINERVA, during this, has remained half-concealed but quietly observant. POLLIE glances at her. MINERVA by a gesture enjoins silence as to her presence.*)

MOLLIE. Oh, what a dreadfully slow echo!

SAMPSON. (*Has been glancing nervously toward LETTIE'S door*) Slow? I can't regulate the time, you know. (*Mops his brow.*) There's an echo in the Scottish Highlands takes *four minutes*!

MOLLIE. But this one takes as long as it pleases.

SAMPSON. You see, it's a problem in *echo-nom-*

LETTIE. (*Off*) Ooh—ooh! Ooh—ooh!

(SAMPSON is staggered. POLLIE laughs.)

MOLLIE. Two echoes! How could that happen?

SAMPSON. (*After an instant's hesitation*) That's what delayed it! Got caught somewhere—broke in two, and came back double! (*POLLIE laughs.*) Now off you go! Off with you! (*Waving them away, and they run off, laughing, doorway up left. SAMPSON watches them off, then he runs toward LETTIE'S door to warn her.*)

MINERVA. (*Steps out, coming down*) Sampson!

SAMPSON. (*With hysterical shriek, turns and stares*) Minerva! Where the devil——? How did you——? (*Shrieks again. Then amiably*) How d'ye do, Minerva?

MINERVA. (*Smiles grimly*) You were not expecting me!

SAMPSON. Expecting——! (*Starts to shriek again, checks it.*) Just at that moment, Minerva, I was not expecting you!

MINERVA. You were singing. You are merry!

SAMPSON. Was merry, Minerva—was! Past tense! (*Mournfully with sidelong glance toward LETTIE'S door.*)

MINERVA. (*Points at bottles*) Is wine good for you?

SAMPSON. Wine? Oh—ah—doctor's orders! Gives me appetite.

MINERVA. Appetite enough for two! (*Indicating covers for two and following SAMPSON'S covert glance toward LETTIE'S door.*)

SAMPSON. (*Turning quickly*) Yes—eat twice as much now! Comes of taking doctor's advice.

MINERVA. Pleasant advice to take. You have wine, song and——! To complete the thing, you need only—woman!

34 A BACHELOR'S HONEYMOON

SAMPSON. (*Raising deprecating hands*) Oh-h! Not without your permission, Minerva! I know when I'm tied hand and foot—ha, ha, ha! I may tug at my chains, but I stayed chained!

MINERVA. But you don't! There's a woman in that room. (*Pointing.*)

SAMPSON. (*Shocked*) Is there? By George, I'll go and see!

MINERVA. (*Checks him, sternly*) What is she doing here—with you?

SAMPSON. (*With assumption of dignity*) Minerva! Have you no confidence in your brother?

MINERVA. No!

SAMPSON. No? Oh, well, I only asked you for information. (*With an idea*) I'll bet you can't guess why she's here.

MINERVA. (*With withering look*) Oh, I think I can.

SAMPSON. (*Feigning disappointment*) And I was saving it for a surprise. She's a brand new governess!

MINERVA. Indeed?

SAMPSON. I knew you'd be surprised.

MINERVA. (*Sharply*) Governess—for two grown-up girls?

SAMPSON. (*Nonplussed for moment*) Oh, did I say "governess"? Slip of the tongue. Companion—chaperone!

MINERVA. (*Pause, moves toward door*) I'll speak to her——

SAMPSON. I'd better see her first—alone! (*Making for door.*) She may not be dressed yet—— (*MINERVA gasps, SAMPSON whirls.*) No, no, no! Oh, you get me all halled up! (*LETTIE, wearing now a pretty frock, enters dailly.*) Minerva! (*For LETTIE'S car. She stops with comic gasp.*) Let me introduce—! Minerva, this is Miss—ah—Miss Lamb.

LETTIE. How do you do, Miss Bachelor? (*Very sweetly, approaching with proffered hand.*)

MINERVA. (*Regards LETTIE with hostile eye, seats herself*) My brother tells me he has engaged you as—ah——

LETTIE. A cook—yes.

MINERVA. Cook?

SAMPSON. No, no—not cook, my dear—! Dear me! (*Floundering, while LETTIE stares and MINERVA smiles grimly.*) Don't you remember—you were to be governess? (*Emphatically, then correcting*) No, no, companion—I mean, chaperone!

LETTIE. (*Pause, having employed her best baby stare*) Oh, yes, now I do remember! I was so recently a cook. (*Laughs a little.*) But whom do I chaperone—you? (*To MINERVA, who glares.*)

SAMPSON. (*Hastily*) No, no—just general chaperoning. Someone needs a chaperone—you're at hand.

MINERVA. (*Rising*) We've had quite enough of this! Young woman, you will leave the house.

SAMPSON. (*In consternation*) Leave the house? Why, she——

LETTIE. Just one minute, please—my contract! (*With meaning look at SAMPSON.*)

MINERVA. (*Astonished*) Contract? Did you sign a contract—with this woman?

SAMPSON. I had to—she wouldn't come on approval.

MINERVA. Indeed? And for just what did you engage her?

SAMPSON. Well, you see—you see, Minerva, it was a sort of blanket contract. (*With large gesture.*) You see, she can cook and—and perform services where a chaperone would not be needed.

MINERVA. (*Eyeing SAMPSON in distrust*) I never so fully realized the wisdom of our revered



father in putting you under restraint! (SAMPSON *turns away, worsted.*)

LETTIE. (*With show of emotion*) I gave up my last employment to take this. And your evident distrust places me in a most embarrassing position—especially as the man I'm engaged to is so jealous!

MINERVA. (*Inclined to regard this as a pretense, a ruse*) Engaged?

SAMPSON. (*Seizing upon this loophole of escape*) Yes, to "Ah-so"!

LETTIE. He said he'd follow me to the ends of the earth.

MINERVA. (*After a moment's reflection, with grim smile*) Very well, then, you can assist Comfort in the kitchen! (SAMPSON *is startled.*)

LETTIE. (*Taken aback*) Assist Comfort in—?

MINERVA. You claim to be a cook! But you must also help to wait on the tables for the garden party.

SAMPSON. Oh, I say, Minerva—— (*Starting an emphatic protest. LETTIE checks him by a look, covertly crossing her heart.*)

MINERVA. (*To SAMPSON*) Well?

(SAMPSON *shakes his head and drops into the easy-chair, looking dolefully foolish. COMFORT enters up right with teapot, etc., on tray, which she places on the table.*)

LETTIE. (*To MINERVA*) Very well.

HOWSON. (*Re-entering up left, gaily*) Miss Minerva, we're all set for the garden party!

MINERVA. (*Nods to him and turns to COMFORT, indicating LETTIE*) This young woman will assist you in the kitchen. I'll come down in a moment and tell you what we want. (*To LETTIE*) Go with Comfort.

LETTIE. (*To COMFORT*) I'll get the apron you

loaned me. (*Goes into her room. COMFORT goes off up right.*)

HOWSON. (*To MINERVA, with undernote of amusement*) Well, you *are* lucky to get such a nice cook!

MINERVA. Yes. (*Going off up right.*)

HOWSON. (*To SAMPSON, with droll look*) Don't you think so, old chap?

SAMPSON. (*Savagely*) Yes!!! (*Turns his back as HECTOR enters up left, meeting HOWSON.*)

HECTOR. The ladies wish to know if there's time for a game of tennis before luncheon.

HOWSON. Hardly! They've found help in the kitchen.

HECTOR. Ah, so?

(*At this, SAMPSON turns and stares uneasily at HECTOR.*)

HOWSON. (*Merrily*) A new cook! Oh, my boy, you never saw a cook so easy to look at!

HECTOR. You have stirred my curiosity.

HOWSON. Here we are, by Jove! (*Spotting and taking from the mantel LETTIE'S picture, hands it to HECTOR.*) Now satisfy your curiosity.

HECTOR. (*Stares at the picture, thunderstruck*) Mon Dieu!

HOWSON. (*Surprised*) Well! She doesn't seem so *easy* for you to look at!

HECTOR. (*Bewildered*) A cook? She? It must be a mistake. Tell me her name.

HOWSON. Her name? I don't—— (*Approaching SAMPSON, who has followed this with grave mis-giving.*) I say, old boy, you know the new cook's name?

(*HECTOR has replaced the photograph on the mantel and turns as LETTIE, wearing the bungalow*

*apron, re-enters and sees him. Same time MINERVA re-enters up right.)*

LETTIE. Ah-so! (*A glad cry, running to him. SAMPSON rises.*)

HECTOR. (*Overwhelmed with surprise*) Lettie!

LETTIE. You've found me at last! I'm going to cook for you! (*Throwing her arms about his neck, HECTOR too overcome for resistance. Same time MOLLIE re-enters up left and halts in pained surprise. The others stare in amazement, MINERVA at centre, stunned. SAMPSON, right centre, looking groggy.*)

HOWSON. (*Right of centre, apart to SAMPSON in mock sympathy*) And just as you'd got your new lace nightie, too! (*SAMPSON suddenly grabs and attempts to throttle him. HOWSON yells. SETH has entered up left and, crossing at back, stops.*)

SAMPSON. (*Releasing HOWSON, calls*) Seth, unleash Bulger!

(*SETH stares. HOWSON startled. SAMPSON glares.*)

HECTOR, held in LETTIE's arms, turns his head and looks ruefully at MOLLIE.)

CURTAIN

## ACT II

SCENE: *The same. The table is cleared and spread now with its usual cover.*

TIME: *About an hour later.*

DISCOVERED: *As curtain rises, COMFORT enters up left, carrying a tray piled with used dishes as from the garden party's luncheon, followed by LETTIE, wearing the bungalow apron, carrying also a tray of used dishes. They cross and go off up right. As they are disappearing, enter MOLLIE up left, followed by HECTOR.*

HECTOR. (*As he enters*) Mollie, wait, listen—a word! (MOLLIE, *going toward the stairway, halts.*) I do not love her—this cook!

MOLLIE. (*Reproachfully, turning down*) Is that why you hug and kiss her?

HECTOR. I do not! She pursues *me*! You know it is you that I love. (MOLLIE, *pleased, but feels she must not relent too easily.*) Ah, if you could look in my heart.

MOLLIE. I wish I could!

HECTOR. (*Placing a hand on his heart*) Oh, if I had only a little window that you could look there!

MOLLIE. Yes, if you only had!

HECTOR. (*Sighs*) I have now a *pain* there! (MOLLIE *glances at him, seems ready to relent.*) I will tell you how all this comes about. Let us walk by the sea.

*(They are moving toward doorway up right, but are held by the scream of a girl, then excited voices, followed by the snarling and growling of a dog rapidly approaching, and next moment HOWSON dashes on up left, hatless, breathless, pale from fright, his clothes rent in many places.)*

HOWSON. Oh! Oh, Doctor! Doctor! That dog! That—— *(Almost falling on the neck of HECTOR, who seats him on the settee. MOLLIE much frightened.)* That dog—— There! There! *(Indicating torn places in his trousers. HECTOR on his knees makes examination. Same time POLLIE, LINDA, BESSIE, MAUD and MINERVA come running on, talking excitedly. Two of the girls have tennis racquets. SAMPSON, now in knickers, enters last with the air of one who has gained his end. Silence as HECTOR looks up, HOWSON eyeing him in great anxiety.)* Well, Doctor—well?

HECTOR. You are terribly lacerated in—*(HOWSON wails in terror)*—in the trousaires! *(General relief. POLLIE giggles.)*

HOWSON. *(Pointing)* Look there! The beast drew blood.

MINERVA. Is he much hurt, Doctor?

HECTOR. A little scratch—like a pin stick. Come, we will cauterize this terrible bite. *(Rising, hesitates, looks at MINERVA.)*

MINERVA. *(Pointing to SAMPSON'S room)* That room, Doctor. *(SAMPSON scowls as HECTOR and HOWSON move toward his room.)*

POLLIE. He needs a tailor more than a doctor! *(Girls titter furtively.)*

*(HOWSON, fearing exposure of his person, grabs at a large tear in his trousers and hurries off, followed by HECTOR.)*



MINERVA. (*Calling after them*) Perhaps he'll find another suit of clothes there.

SAMPSON. (*In protest*) He'll find only *my* clothes there, Minerva!

MINERVA. (*Severely*) It was your dog that put him in need of a change!

LINDA. Let's finish the game. (*Swings her racquet.*)

POLLIE. What's the score?

BESSIE. It's deuce.

MAUD. We can play it out without our boy friends. (*Glancing toward SAMPSON'S door.*)

POLLIE. Auntie, will you umpire?

MINERVA. Yes, I'll join you in a moment.

POLLIE. Here we go, then. (*Following the girls who, chattering merrily, run off up left, as SETH enters up right. He looks very uneasy as MINERVA speaks. LETTIE, an empty tray in hand, reappears and pauses in the doorway.*)

MINERVA. Why did you order Seth to unleash the dog?

SAMPSON. (*Dissimulating*) Why, he needed exercise.

MINERVA. Seth, you will shoot that dog.

SAMPSON. What for, Minerva?

MINERVA. The dog must be mad, else he wouldn't be biting people. (*Goes off doorway up left.*)

SETH. (*With shake of head*) Too bad, sir. Bulger's a valuable animal.

SAMPSON. Not what he was once—— (*SETH looks surprised.*) He'd have chewed him up! (*With jerk of head toward door of his room, SETH goes off up right as LETTIE comes forward.*)

LETTIE. (*With ironic smile*) Nice quiet place! Minerva never comes here—no one to bother us! (*Laughs derisively.*)

SAMPSON. (*Fretfully*) Yes, laugh. But I am in

an awful predicament. Look at the position it puts me in!

LETTIE. You've got nothing on me. (*Indicating tray and apron.*) A regular fag, that's what I am!

SAMPSON. I feel like forty different kinds of a damn fool!

LETTIE. (*With nod toward doorway up left*) That garden party's holding the merry post mortem over us!

SAMPSON. If this keeps up, I'll be a candidate for the nut college! You ought to have let me announce the marriage.

LETTIE. That would have made matters worse!

SAM. Worse?

LETTIE. I saw it in Minerva's eye the minute she looked at me. (*SAMPSON sighs, looking disconsolate.*) Thank me for saving your income. At least, we don't have to go sparring for meals.

SAM. But, dear heart, we can't go on like this—living apart. (*Approaching as if to caress her. She draws away, glancing about.*) You're my wife, you know.

LETTIE. (*In warning*) If you let Minerva guess that now, you'll send me back with the troupers!

SAM. Oh, Lord!

LETTIE. (*Smiling*) And I may not pull down salary enough to support you in the manner to which you're accustomed.

SAMPSON. (*Shakes his head*) You'll never draw salary enough to become a meal-ticket for me, Lettie. I'm no squaw man. (*After glance up left, in lowered voice*) Let's light out.

LETTIE. How?

SAMPSON. We can't go together, of course. I'll pretend to go back to the Adirondacks, and a little later you can join me in New York.

LETTIE. (*In sarcasm*) Still living apart, but meeting on the sly—oh, grand! And do you think Mi-

nerva wouldn't get wise? Huh, she *knows you!*

SAMPSON. She knows me like she'd been through me with a flash lamp.

LETTIE. Our best bet is to throw a discreet front and stick it out here. Our luck may change. But remember, Minerva's watching us. We must cure her of suspicion by going our separate ways for a while. She mustn't even see us together.

SAMPSON. (*Sitting dejectedly on settee*) I could stand it better if you didn't carry on with that Hector—hugging and kissing him!

LETTIE. It's to turn Minerva's eyes away from us. That's part of the *cure!*

SAMPSON. But it hurts, I tell you—it hurts!

LETTIE. (*In sympathy*) Well, Sammy, it hurts me just as much as it hurts you.

SAMPSON. If you felt as I do when you kiss him—you'd *bite* him! (*LETTIE laughs.*) And that Howson's been throwing his weight around! (*With hostile glance toward the door.*) I saw him talking to Minerva and I believe he was just going to spill the little tableau he witnessed here this morning, when the dog interrupted him!

LETTIE. Can't you gag him somehow?

SAMPSON. Only by bumping him off!

LETTIE. We'll find some way! (*Suddenly*) Oh! Stupefy him with bootleg whiskey—to cure the dog-bite!

SAMPSON. He never drinks.

LETTIE. Ooh—— (*Hearing a voice, runs off with tray up left.*)

HECTOR. No, you must—— (*Entering same instant, catches sight of LETTIE disappearing and stops. Then speaks off.*) Here you must remain till I return. (*Closes door and is going toward doorway up left.*)

SAMPSON. (*Rising*) Doctor—how is the patient?

HECTOR. (*Making light of it*) Oh—! More scared he is than hurt. (*Hesitates, glancing again in direction LETTIE went. Then in growing excitement*) Mr. Bachelor, I must tell you of Miss Lamb, who is now a cook, which it is her claim I made her a cook! And therefore, all of a sudden, she loves me! She frets me with her attentions. You perhaps have noticed how she throws herself at me!

SAMPSON. (*With feeling*) Have I noticed? Oh, yes, I have—I *have*!

HECTOR. It goes past my comprehension! I crack my head to understand it! (*With gestures.*)

SAMPSON. Me, too! I'm half cracked myself over it! (*With similar gestures.*)

HECTOR. Ah, so? Would you perhaps help me to *cure* her of this mad infatuation?

SAMPSON. *Cure* her! You bet I'll help you!

HECTOR. Ah, you are my friend! (*Seizing his hand.*)

SAMPSON. You just leave it to me.

HECTOR. (*In gratitude*) Ah, I thank you! You remove a mountain from my heart! (*Runs off doorway up left.*)

SAMPSON. (*Looking after him*) Same here, brother—only more so!

HOWSON. (*Suddenly opens the door and pokes his head out, glancing around*) Dr. Fournoy gone?

SAMPSON. (*With surly look*) Yeah!

HOWSON. (*Enters, wearing now the suit worn by SAMPSON in Act I. It is ill-fitting*) He says I'm nervous—ought to keep quiet.

SAMPSON. (*Significantly*) Better take that advice. It may keep you out of trouble.

HOWSON. (*Eyes him shrewdly*) Keep me out of trouble! You sic'd that dog on me! You told him to bite me. (*SAMPSON gives him a pitying grin.*) Oh, you understand each other—same breed!

(Struts away, driving his hands into trousers' pockets.)

SAMPSON. (Pointing) Here, you take your hands out of my pockets! (In sudden thought) Did I leave any valuables in—— (Running and tapping the pockets, HOWSON uplifting his arms. SAMPSON, on recovering the page of the pink newspaper, manifests relief as he pockets it.)

HOWSON. Call that valuable?

SAMPSON. Immensely.

HOWSON. (Glances at the clothes, recognizing them) Oh, you were wearing this suit—when I found our pretty cook on your knee! (LETTIE, with tray of dishes, re-enters up left, overhearing. She halts in doorway.) Maybe you think it won't interest Minerva to hear about that—and about the new fashion in lace nighties for men?

SAMPSON. (Pointing a threatening finger) Say, if you open your head about that, I'll knock you so far it'll cost you a dollar to write home! (Report of revolver in distance.)

HOWSON. What was that? (As HOWSON turns, LETTIE draws back out of view.)

SAMPSON. The passing of poor Bulger.

HOWSON. I'm glad you've put an end to that mutt!

SAMPSON. Minerva ordered him shot! (LETTIE has moved quietly over at back and has set her tray on the table. She now signals SAMPSON, with action of drinking. He nods.) Can you guess why?

HOWSON. Why?

SAMPSON. She said he was——! I hate to tell you.

(LETTIE moves quickly forward.)

HOWSON. Ah, our charming cook! You know I can't get over your remarkable cooking!

LETTIE. Perhaps you ought to take something for it. (*Smiling sweetly, suddenly sobers, eyeing him in feigned alarm.*)

HOWSON. (*Puzzled by her manner*) What's wrong—the cooking? Oh—these clothes! Knock your eye out, don't they? This is the suit! (*With insinuating smirk, crooking his leg, slaps his knee.*) It was on this knee.

LETTIE. (*Unheeding*) You're so strange. Mr. Bachelor, don't you notice how *badly* he looks? (*Winks at BACHELOR.*)

SAMPSON. (*Trying to guess her purpose*) Yes—but he never *did* look good to me!

LETTIE. Don't you notice—the glassy look in the eyes? (*With meaning look at BACHELOR.*)

SAMPSON. (*Now wise*) Now you speak of it, yes—kind of starey!

HOWSON. Huh! Expect me to look fit, after being lacerated by that beast?

SAMPSON. (*Suddenly*) I've got it! The dog!

LETTIE. That's it, the dog!

HOWSON. (*Now alarmed*) Dog? What was the matter with the dog?

SAMPSON. (*Anxiously*) Tell me—did he draw blood?

HOWSON. Oh, just a mere—little—trifling *speck*!

LETTIE and SAM. (*With long faces*) He *did*?

HOWSON. (*In growing fear*) Say—— Say, was that dog—*mad*?

SAMPSON. That was Minerva's *word*!

HOWSON. Ma—mad?

SAMPSON. Twelve—twelve before you had that dog bitten before he bit the dust!

LETTIE. And you the unlucky *thirteenth*!

HOWSON. (*Panic-stricken*) Where's Dr. Four-noy? (*Turning to run.*)



LETTIE. (*Quickly*) What can *he* do?

SAMPSON. What could *Pasteur* do?

HOWSON. (*Shouting*) Well, what can *I* do?

LETTIE and SAMPSON. Whiskey!

HOWSON. I never touch it—where can I get some?

SAMPSON. (*Pointing*) My room—demijohn—clothes-closet shelf—— (*HOWSON, prancing with anxiety, now dashes off to room. BACHELOR follows, calling after him*) It's all yours, my boy! Drink freely and deep! (*Slight pause.*) Then lie down—and let the liquor take hold! (*Pulls the door shut, turns and looks at LETTIE.*)

LETTIE. I guess that'll hold him for a while!

SAMPSON. It's a costly sleeping draft—a dollar a swaller!

(*Voices of persons approaching heard.*)

LETTIE. (*Glances in direction*) May be *Minerva*! (*Runs, grabs up her tray and hurries off up right as enter up left LINDA, POLLIE, MAUD and BESSIE, all looking rather bored.*)

LINDA. (*As she enters*) Oh, tennis isn't half as good fun without the men.

SAMPSON. How did the game come out?

MAUD. The set ended in love game.

BESSIE. Without men it's usually love all.

POLLIE. (*Facetiously*) With them it's usually all for love!

BESSIE. (*Laughingly*) That's the case with Hector—he's all for Mollie!

POLLIE. And his patient there laid up for repairs. (*Glancing at the door, where BACHELOR has been listening.*) How is he, Dad?

SAMPSON. (*Nervous at the word "Dad," glances uneasily in direction LETTIE went*) Oh, he—ah—he's taken a sleeping draft! (*Anxious to forestall a*

*meeting between LETTIE and POLLIE.*) Why don't you girls try some golf?

LINDA. (*Hailing this, to the others*) What's the matter with that? Say, nine holes?

BESSIE. We didn't bring along the clubs.

SAMPSON. I guess Seth can dig up clubs for you—keeps 'em in the bowling alley.

MAUD. And maybe he'll caddie for us.

SAMPSON. Sure he will. Tell him I said so. (*Directing girls toward doorway up right.*)

LINDA. All right. Come on, girls!

(*Exeunt LINDA, MAUD and BESSIE, while POLLIE sits on settee.*)

SAMPSON. (*Disappointed*) Thought you were going to play golf.

POLLIE. (*Shakes her head*) Tired! I put pep into my tennis. They only fan the air.

SAMPSON. (*Glances uneasily at LETTIE'S door, then looks in surprise as POLLIE starts laughing softly*) Well? What amuses you?

POLLIE. That echo this morning—the way it misbehaved.

SAMPSON. (*Eyeing her suspiciously*) Mis—misbehaved?

POLLIE. (*Shakes a finger at him in mock reproach*) Daddy, you're a gay old sport!

SAMPSON. Gay old—? What d'ye mean?

POLLIE. Oh, I don't blame you for breaking loose. I know Auntie's always held a tight rein on you.

SAMPSON. I should say she has, and I—! Say, Pollie, what are you driving at?

(*LETTIE re-enters unnoticed and is going toward her room.*)

POLLIE. It's all right, Dad! (*LETTIE, at the word "Dad," halts and stares in astonishment.*) We know about you and the echoing cook. But I do think you might have looked higher than a *cook*!

SAMPSON. (*Sternly*) Look here, Daughter! I want you to understand there's been nothing——

(*LETTIE, to avoid appearance of eavesdropping, clears her throat or makes some sound. SAMPSON, startled, turns and, finding her accusing eyes fixed upon him, tries to speak, but falters, then turns abruptly and goes rapidly off up left. POLLIE, rising, looks after him in surprise. Then she looks at LETTIE.*)

LETTIE. (*Taking her cue from POLLIE's speech—affects at first the manner of the menial*) Excuse me, Miss. I thought you was one of the young ladies from the camp. Didn't I hear Mr. Bachelor callin' you—*Daughter*?

POLLIE. 'Course!

LETTIE. M'm——! (*Nodding her head, puzzled, perplexed.*) Has he got any more—like you?

POLLIE. (*Amused, smiling*) Mollie.

LETTIE. M'm——! What about the two weeny little toddlers? (*Indicating height of little tots.*)

POLLIE. (*Startled*) Little—little toddlers! Oh, boy! (*MOLLIE enters up left and pauses.*) Say, Mollie, what d'ye think? Dad's got two little——(*To LETTIE*) Boys or girls?

LETTIE. Girls.

MOLLIE. Heavens! (*Hurrying down.*)

POLLIE. We never guessed he'd gone on the loose as bad as that!

MOLLIE. (*Excitedly*) Where are they?

POLLIE. What do they look like?

LETTIE. Take a look! (*Pointing to the photo-*

*graph on the mantel. POLLIE and MOLLIE look, realize LETTIE's error, and laugh.)*

MOLLIE. (*Relieved*) Oh, how you scared me!

LETTIE. (*Now clear*) Ah! I see. You've outgrown the picture.

POLLIE. (*Boastfully*) Oh, we've been coming along since then!

LETTIE. (*In seeming admiration*) And picking up a few things on the way. How old are you?

MOLLIE. Seventeen!

POLLIE. (*In disdain*) That's *her* age! I'm about seventy-seven! You see, I've been *living*!

LETTIE. And living pretty fast to have reached that age at your time of life.

POLLIE. Once I ran away from the knowledge-box and hit the high spots. (*Vaingloriously*) I've seen about everything they've got on Broadway—cabarets, supper clubs—— (*With expansive gesture.*)

LETTIE. (*Nods*) The danger zone—where hugging is set to music.

POLLIE. From shimmy and shiver to Charleston! (*Executes a few steps of some dance in jazz time.*) One evening I went motoring with one of those little snuggle-up hip-hounds. When I rebelled he left me on the road, and I had to do a five-mile ankle excursion home.

LETTIE. (*Apparently much impressed*) What galumptious times you must have had!

POLLIE. I'll say I have! (*Lighting cigarette, sits on settee with the air of one who has looked deep into life and found it hollow.*)

LETTIE. And Mollie—have you hit the high spots, too? (*Smiling at MOLLIE, who, seated in the easy-chair, looks abashed, feeling outclassed by the brilliant POLLIE.*)

POLLIE. No, she's a little gun-shy of the bright

lights. She's for romance, true love, and that old stuff.

LETTIE. (*With subtle change of manner*) Yes, that is old stuff. It was old before the days of King Tut—and it will be always *new*! (*Both girls look at her in surprise.*) And before you're half as old as you think you are, Miss Pollie, you'll realize this old world couldn't get along without romance and true love. (*MOLLIE, smiling now, has come up a bit in her own esteem.*)

POLLIE. (*Looking somewhat disconcerted*) Well, for a *cook*, you talk like a highbrow!

LETTIE. I'm not a real cook. I wish I were.

POLLIE. (*In surprise*) You do?

LETTIE. It isn't enough just to know there are no cottages in cottage pudding. Believe me, the cook's a most important member. If she knows her business, she can keep the doctor away. Oh, yes! And cooking's an art that will be going strong—(*Aiming this at POLLIE*)—when the shimmy, and the hooligan hug, and the banana-peel glide are all out of date!

POLLIE. Well—! You make *me* feel like a total loss!

LETTIE. Real cooks don't wear these. (*Drawing off a bracelet which has slipped down over her hand. Then drawing off the other, drops both into pocket of her apron.*)

MOLLIE. (*Ingenuously, rising*) I like you—only—— (*Hesitates.*)

LETTIE. Only what?

MOLLIE. I wish you weren't such an awful vamp!

LETTIE. (*Smiles*) Vamp?

MOLLIE. The way you're chasing after Hector!

LETTIE. And you're broken-hearted over it!

MOLLIE. Yes, I am!

LETTIE. (*In sympathy, putting an arm about her*) Listen, Mollie! Don't mind anything you may see—I'm *not*! Hector's a fine fellow, and he's all for

you—to have and to hold! (MOLLIE *impulsively flings her arms about LETTIE and kisses her.*) Now we understand each other, let's all be good friends—shall we? (*Offering a hand to each.*)

MOLLIE. (*Seizing her hand*) Oh, yes, let's!

POLLIE. All is forgiven! (*Approaching and taking LETTIE'S other hand. Then to MOLLIE*) Now, little sister, I guess we'd better go and help those girls find the golf-ball.

MOLLIE. Come on! (*Running toward doorway up right, followed by POLLIE.*)

LETTIE. Oh, and Pollie—! (*She turns.*) Better drop a few years from your age!

POLLIE. I have! (*Laughing, they rung off, as enter up left MINERVA and HECTOR.*)

MINERVA. (*Entering*) No, Hector, I like you very much. But that doesn't blind me to the impropriety of your paying addresses to my niece when your promise has been given to Miss Lamb.

LETTIE. (*Approaching*) Oh, here you are, "Ah-so"! I've been looking——

HECTOR. Excuse me, I must look to my patient. (*Turning toward door L.2.*)

LETTIE. (*Quickly checking him*) Oh, he's sleeping! (HECTOR and MINERVA look at her in surprise.)

HECTOR. How could you know he sleeps?

LETTIE. I heard him! (*All listen.*)

HECTOR. I hear nothing.

LETTIE. He isn't sonorous now! (HECTOR turns again toward the door.) Ooh—— (*Running, seizes his hand and draws him back.*) You want to leave me. You hurt me!

(SAMPSON appears in doorway up left, pauses, anxious, apprehensive.)



HECTOR. (*Indignant*) How is this that I hurt you? It is you who hurt me!

LETTIE. I've only asked you to keep your promise.

HECTOR. I have told you that I do not love you. Will you not release me?

LETTIE. No! I mean to win back your love—your antiseptic true love!

HECTOR. *Tres bien!* I am a man of honor. We shall then be married.

(LETTIE, startled, releases his hand, looking disconcerted. SAMPSON comes quickly forward.)

MINERVA. That is as it should be. There's a clergyman at the camp, I'm told. I'll send for him and we'll have the ceremony performed at once. (*Turning to go up.*)

SAMPSON. (*Checking her*) Stop! This can't go on, Minerva.

MINERVA. (*Glares at him*) What right have you to interfere?

SAMPSON. I happen to know that she's already married!

HECTOR and MINERVA. Married!

(HECTOR overjoyed but puzzled. LETTIE eyes BACHELOR uneasily and covertly crosses her heart.)

MINERVA. (*Glares at LETTIE*) This morning you were engaged to Hector Fournoy! Have you since married someone else?

LETTIE. (*Demurely penitent*) You see, mine was a runaway marriage, and I've been obliged to keep it a dark secret—until a legal matter which keeps me apart from my husband can be settled up.

MINERVA. (*Turning in cynical incredulity to*

SAMPSON) And you engage her as governess, companion, chaperone, cook. Why this blanket contract with the wife of a man who is nothing to you?

SAMPSON. Nothing to me? *Me?* (*Tapping himself on the breast.*) Why, Minerva, he's been like a twin brother to me—all my life! (*MINERVA eyes SAMPSON in distrust, then looks at LETTIE.*)

LETTIE. Yes, Mr. Bachelor and my husband have always been inseparable.

SAMPSON. Can you blame me for trying to help his wife?

MINERVA. (*Glancing from one to the other*) Well, it's the most extraordinary case I've ever heard of!

HECTOR. (*To LETTIE in some temper*) And more extraordinary that you should throw yourself at me! But I will speak of this again. (*Bows and hurries off up right.*)

MINERVA. I shall speak of it at once. You——

(*HOWSON heard off in room uttering frightened cries and barking like a dog. All, startled, stare, then retreat as HOWSON, much disheveled, dashes from the room, leaving the door open. He is the victim of an hallucination due to fear and the unaccustomed stimulus of alcohol on a lively imagination. He does not reel, is not unsteady in his movements.*)

HOWSON. O! O! Bachelor! O! O! (*Whimpering in fear as he runs and clings to BACHELOR.*)

SAMPSON. (*Eyeing him uneasily*) What's the matter?

HOWSON. I'm afraid—'fraid of the dog! (*Looking toward the room.*)

SAMPSON. (*Dissimulating*) Have you been drinking?

HOWSON. (*Whimpering*) I'm 'fraid he'll bite me.

SAMPSON. Rubbish! Go back and sleep it off. (*Urging him toward the room.*)

HOWSON. (*Resists, whimpering*) No, the dog's in there! (*Glances toward the room, then with cry of fright dodges to right of BACHELOR and barks at an imaginary dog making for his legs. Hopping as he barks*) Bow-wow! Bow-wow! etc.

(MINERVA and LETTIE dart away, taking refuge in the upper entrances.)

SAMPSON. (*Nervously*) Don't do that!

HOWSON. (*Now relieved, but whimpering*) That's how I keep him off. (*Clings to BACHELOR, peering around for the dog.*)

SAMPSON. (*Trying to free himself*) You're crazy! Mad!

HOWSON. (*Clinging desperately*) No, the dog's mad! He wants to get me!

SAMPSON. Let go of me—dog-on you! (*Tears himself free and turns away right, mopping his perspiring brow. HOWSON stands in fear, eyeing the open door.*)

MINERVA. (*Coming forward a little, calls to BACHELOR*) What's the matter with him?

SAMPSON. He—er—he's got dog-onitis!

MINERVA. Dog-on-what? (*SETH enters up left and halts, struck by the attitudes of the characters.*) Go and bring Dr. Fournoy here at once.

(*Exit SETH up left as COMFORT enters up right.*)

COMFORT. (*Approaching*) Excuse me, Miss Minerva, I—

MINERVA. (*Checks her, nearing HOWSON, in soothing voice*) There isn't any dog. He's been—

HOWSON. (*Suddenly points to the door*) There he comes—— (*Yelps in terror, beating it up to the window, hides in the hangings, barking, while the women make for the upper entrances as before. HOWSON peeps and seeing no dog, his terror subsides. He sits on the window-seat, picks up and holds on either arm LETTIE'S mascot dolls, croons to them in a silly manner.*)

MINERVA. (*Moving out cautiously, peers round at HOWSON, then approaching BACHELOR*) Was the dog really mad?

SAMPSON. Certainly not! He must have got that notion—hearing you'd had him shot.

MINERVA. Where did he get the liquor?

SAMPSON. Merely a sleeping draft I gave him—to quiet his nerves.

(*HOWSON now comes skipping down, cooing to the dolls as to a pair of babies. The women give him a clear berth.*)

LETTIE. (*To rescue her mascots, approaches timidly*) Please give me my—— (*HOWSON turns sharply and glares at her. She retreats.*)

HOWSON. (*His manner swiftly changing, coos to the dolls*) Yes, they're sleepy! Go to mamma, darlings. (*Placing them tenderly in LETTIE'S arms.*) She'll put you in your little trundle bed. (*Patting LETTIE'S arm. Abruptly changing to the tearful, whimpering mood*) I'm leading a dog's life here!

SAMPSON. Say, we've had enough of your babble! Go to bed! (*Sends him with a shove toward the room.*)

HOWSON. (*His aberration returning, faces about*) I'm afraid—'fraid I'm going to bite you! (*Making for SAMPSON, who dodges.*) Going to bite your ear off! (*Now crouching as if to spring on SAMPSON.*)

SAMPSON. (*Alarmed. To scare HOWSON off, points at the imaginary dog*) Sic 'em, Bulger!

(HOWSON, seeing the dog again at his heels, barks furiously in fright, inadvertently pursuing SAMPSON, who runs to avoid him, while the women dodge the two, uttering cries of alarm. During this enter up right HECTOR, followed by SETH, carrying a small medicine case. HECTOR intercepts and grips HOWSON's shoulder, looks him intently in the eyes, promptly quelling his fears.)

HECTOR. Phew! You smell like a whiskey barrel!

HOWSON. (*Whimpers*) I'm 'fraid of the dog!

HECTOR. Ah, so! (*Looks at SETH, who hands him the medicine case.*) Now I'll cure you of the dog. Come! (*Running him off to room, closing the door. SETH and COMFORT go off up right.*)

MINERVA. (*Accusation in her tone*) Sleeping draft, you called it!

SAMPSON. (*Innocently*) Obtained on a doctor's prescription.

HECTOR. (*Suddenly appearing in the doorway, a gallon demijohn in hand*) Mr. Bachelor! The mad dog came out of this! (*Holds up demijohn, stern rebuke in his eyes, retires, closing the door.*)

MINERVA. Sampson, you'd better leave here at once!

SAMPSON. (*Startled*) Leave——?

MINERVA. Your absence will improve the moral tone. (*Interrupts as SAMPSON would speak.*) Don't imagine your quibbling evasions have deceived me. Fortunately I got here before you could work out your designs. (*With glance from him to LETTIE.*)

SAMPSON. My designs! (*With doleful shake of the head.*)

MINERVA. I've always thought you a fool. Now I find you—you're a loose fish! (*LETTIE throws a look of sympathy at SAMPSON.*) You quit here at once.

SAMPSON. (*Resignedly*) Oh, well, I'd have to swim out anyway! (*Glancing toward his room.*) Ousted from my room, I've no place to park my fins.

MINERVA. You should have stayed in the Adirondacks.

SAMPSON. (*Looks quickly at his watch*) I could catch the last train back, if they'd let me change my clothes and pack my bag. (*Looking toward his room again.*)

MINERVA. Oh, I think they'll let you. In any case, you can't stay here.

(*SAMPSON looks from MINERVA to LETTIE, respirees deeply, goes to his door, knocks, then enters, closing the door. MINERVA looks at LETTIE.*)

LETTIE. (*Drops her dolls on the easy-chair and faces her*) Well, what about me?

MINERVA. How long have you known my brother?

LETTIE. (*Demurely*) Only a short time. I met him a little while before I was married.

MINERVA. (*After a moment's thought*) I don't see that you're to blame. You best know your motive for playing pranks on Hector Fournoy.

LETTIE. (*Smiles*) I was paying him back for the way he treated me.

MINERVA. Well, that's between yourselves. It seems you came here in good faith under an agreement with my brother. But you must have nothing more to do with him. (*LETTIE averts her face, finding it difficult to control her amusement.*) Your willingness to help us out here today shows that you're no trifler.



LETTIE. If you've any more little odd jobs——

(MINERVA *shakes her head as COMFORT re-enters up right.*)

MINERVA. Well, Comfort?

COMFORT. I wanted to ask what you'd like for dinner.

MINERVA. Oh, anything! I've no appetite—only a headache. (*Exit COMFORT up right. MINERVA going toward the stairs.*) I came here for rest. I might better have stayed in town. (*Goes upstairs as POLLIE, MOLLIE and LINDA, latter with golf club, enter merrily up left.*)

LETTIE. Well, did you find the golf ball? (*The girls laugh.*)

POLLIE. The shortest game on record! On the first drive, Linda sliced and the ball spun into the duck pond. Seth refused to dive in for Linda's one and only ball—so they called it a hole-out! (*General amusement.*)

LETTIE. Fast work! What's on for this evening?

POLLIE. (*In confidential manner, glancing toward the stairs*) Bridge party—down at the Camp.

LINDA. But late—when the boys get back.

POLLIE. We're going to sneak down there.

MOLLIE. (*Gleefully*) You come with us!

LETTIE. I'd like to. Do you all play bridge?

MOLLIE and LINDA. (*Nodding*) Oh, yes! Yes, of course.

POLLIE. Oh, you ought to see me shoot craps! (*Half squatting in the manner of a coon crap-shooting on the ground*) Come seben! Come 'leven! (*With snapping of fingers and expulsions of breath. The others bending to watch her with hands on knees.*) It's all in the snap o' the fingers.

LETTIE. Do you play for money?

POLLIE. (*Nods her head, rising*) Em-ha! Lost a dollar once on a "fade."

MAUD. (*Entering hurriedly up left*) Oh, come on, girls! We're waiting for you in the bowling alley.

LETTIE. See you later.

(*MOLLIE waves to LETTIE, who, untying bungalow apron, moves off up right. LINDA, attracted by the mascot dolls on easy-chair, examines them curiously.*)

MAUD. Ninepins all set up—Bessie crazy to roll! (*Turning to go, MOLLIE and POLLIE moving to follow. LINDA, heedless, interested in the dolls.*)

POLLIE. (*Halting*) Oh, say, Linda! Join the Don't-Waste-Time Movement and come along! (*Exit, following the others up left. LINDA hurries after them. Same time SAMPSON re-enters in his shirt-sleeves, coat and pair of trousers over his arm.*)

SAMPSON. (*Angrily as he appears*) Well, what's he keeping on ragging me for? The thing's done!

HECTOR. (*Appears in doorway, following*) It is impossible, all at once, to bring this man to reason—out of the condition you have put him in with your bootleg poison!

SAMPSON. Well, he might let me dress—in my own room!

HECTOR. It is better that you go and dress yourself in another room.

SAMPSON. There isn't any other room vacant! My sister and daughters upstairs—— (*Pointing.*) Miss Lamb there! (*Pointing to LETTIE's door.*) Comfort and her husband down there! (*Pointing downward.*) Where am I to go?

HECTOR. (*Stiffly*) I am sorry, but this is not my fault. (*Withdraws into room, shutting the door.*)

(SAMPSON *shakes his head ruefully, glances helplessly about, looks resentfully at his own door and turns away. He halts irresolute, then moves toward the stairs, but stops with hopeless shake of the head. Checking the action, he looks toward LETTIE'S room, weighing this as a possible way out of his predicament. He hastily consults his watch, glances precautionously about and moves quickly to LETTIE'S door, knocks softly, listens, knocks louder and, getting no response, opens the door and slips in quickly, closing the door. In a moment LETTIE re-enters up right, now minus the bungalow apron. She pauses, looking toward SAMPSON'S door, crosses swiftly, hesitates, then knocks on the door, which in a moment opens and HECTOR appears.*)

LETTIE. Has Mr. Bachelor finished dressing?

HECTOR. (*Coldly polite*) Mr. Bachelor is not here. He has gone.

LETTIE. Gone? (*Then dissembling her surprise.*) Oh, I—ah—! Thank you. (HECTOR *bows and returns to the room, closing the door. LETTIE pauses, looking bothered, perplexed. She crosses, opens her door and goes into room. She utters a startled cry and immediately re-appears, backing out of the room.*) You come out of there!

SAMPSON. (*Poking his head through the doorway*) You see I'm undressed! I couldn't manage over there—— (*Nods toward the door across.*) That barking nut was all over the place. I've got to make my train. Can't you wait a minute?

LETTIE. No, I can't! I want to dress, too.

SAMPSON. Well, come on in and dress. What's the harm? You're my wife!

LETTIE. No, I'm not! You deceived me about your daughters.

SAMPSON. I only marked down their age! They'll be doing it themselves soon enough!

LETTIE. Oh, I've a lot to say to you!

SAMPSON. Well, come in and say it—— (*Interrupts as LETTIE would speak.*) Don't stand arguing there—we'll be seen! (*LETTIE turns to see if they're observed.*) Oh, come on in—— (*Seizing her arm and drawing her into the room.*)

LETTIE. (*Resisting*) Let me go! Let—go—of—me——!

(*Same instant COMFORT re-enters up right, the bungalow apron over her arm, taking from the pocket LETTIE'S bracelets, to return them. Hearing LETTIE'S protesting words, COMFORT halts in surprise. As LETTIE'S door is shut, COMFORT moves forward, staring in wonderment, then in suspicion. She cocks her head to listen and a cunning smile comes to her face. She glances precautiously about, then tiptoes to LETTIE'S door and bends, applying her eye to the keyhole. Covering her mouth to stifle an outcry, she straightens up, a scandalized look on her face. After a pause, she bends and keyholes again, this time with malice aforethought. MINERVA, during this, re-appears coming downstairs.*)

MINERVA. (*Seeing COMFORT, halts. Severely in rebuke*) Comfort! What are you doing there?

COMFORT. (*Straightens up, big with righteous wrath*) I come to return her bracelets! (*Jams them into pocket of the apron as if they burned her fingers, then points at LETTIE'S door.*) They're in that room—together!

MINERVA. They? Who?

COMFORT. Mr. Bachelor and—Miss Lamb!

MINERVA. (*Shocked*) Oh! What are they doing there?

COMFORT. (*Glances toward the door*) Doin'? They're both of 'em——! (*Unable to finish, approaches MINERVA.*) Whisper—— (*MINERVA bends to listen and COMFORT whispers in her ear.*)

MINERVA. (*Horried*) Oh! Oh-h——! Is it possible?

COMFORT. It's the awful truth! Go and look for yourself.

MINERVA. (*Moves to go, but checks herself*) No, I can't! It's too dreadful—too shocking! (*Both stare at the door.*)

HECTOR. (*Re-enters cheerfully*) So! I have put the mad dog to flight! Very soon our friend is himself again—— (*The two women have merely glanced at him and turned their eyes again on the door. He eyes them curiously, then fixes his gaze on the door.*) This door—you find it interesting!

MINERVA. (*Grimly*) Not the door—but what's behind it!

HECTOR. Ah, so! You have good eyes— I cannot see behind the door.

COMFORT. Try the keyhole!

HECTOR. (*Smiling, shrugs*) Neither have I the eye for that. What is behind this door?

MINERVA. (*In semi-tragic manner*) My family's disgrace! My brother and that woman——! Oh, it's too shocking, I——! Give me your ear. (*HECTOR presents his ear and MINERVA whispers in it as COMFORT did in hers.*)

HECTOR. (*Stunned*) *Mort et vie!* Is this possible?

MINERVA. (*Solemnly*) It's the awful truth!

COMFORT. Excuse me, Miss Minerva, but I ought to tell you—he dragged her into the room—her a-beggin' him to let her go!

MINERVA. (*Shocked*) Dragged her in!

HECTOR. (*In manner drily sarcastic*) Ha! He was to cure her of the mad infatuation for me! (*Waves toward the door.*) He takes this way to make the cure!

(*The door opens and SAMPSON re-enters, wearing now a traveling suit, a traveling cap in his hand. Startled by the battery of eyes leveled at him, he halts, disconcerted, embarrassed.*)

MINERVA. (*After pause, vindictively*) You libertine! (*SAMPSON, realizing that in the circumstances no explanation would avail, simply gestures acceptance of fate's decree and goes stoically to the settee and sits.*) Well? Have you nothing to say for yourself?

SAMPSON. You're the judge, Minerva. Pronounce your sentence.

MINERVA. (*Impressively*) You know what that will be!

SAMPSON. I guess it's the key to the street.

MINERVA. And the gate locked against your return!

SAMPSON. In that case, I must get the balance of my duffle out of that room. (*Glancing toward his own door.*)

MINERVA. And you'd better take along your cook! (*With nod toward LETTIE'S door.*)

(*SETH enters up right, joining COMFORT. MINERVA goes to them, enjoining secrecy.*)

HECTOR. (*In bantering manner*) It would seem she has cooked the goose for you!

SAMPSON. Yep! I'm the goosey-gander!

HECTOR. However, I should thank you for the successful way you have cured her of me.

SAMPSON. Don't mention it!



[*POLLIE and MOLLIE enter gaily up left, but halt in surprise as MINERVA speaks.*]

MINERVA. I will bid you good-bye, Sampson. I'm through with you. To me—you are dead! *(Turns toward the stairs. To POLLIE and MOLLIE)* Come with me.

POLLIE and MOLLIE. *(Ad lib. as they follow MINERVA upstairs)* Auntie, what is it? What has happened? Why don't you tell us? *(Etc. Etc.)*

*(Same time exeunt COMFORT and SETH up right. LETTIE has appeared in her doorway, overhearing MINERVA'S parting shot.)*

HECTOR. *(A hostile note now in his voice)* Since I have come to understand this affair, there is one more thing I will mention to you.

SAMPSON. *(Recklessly)* Go as far as you like!

HECTOR. You found it convenient for your intrigue—to make of me the billy-goat! *(Now in manner severely curt)* For this, you must give me an explanation—or you will give me—*satisfaction*. Au revoir! *(Goes into SAMPSON'S room.)*

LETTIE. *(In waggish irony, moving to center)* Aren't we having a merry little honeymoon!

SAMPSON. *(Lugubriously, weeping out the words)* And I started this day with such bright hopes! *(Slumps down in his seat, pulling his cap down over his eyes.)*

CURTAIN

### ACT III .

SCENE: *The same. The mascot dolls have been removed from the easy-chair.*

TIME: *About an hour later, nearing twilight.*

DISCOVERED: *As the curtain rises, door L.2 opens and HECTOR enters, followed by HOWSON, who blinks his eyes at first and clears his throat frequently.*

HOWSON. (*Entering*) That last dose, Doctor, what was it—liquid fire?

HECTOR. (*In his professional manner*) No matter for the name.

HOWSON. I'd been watching hand-embroidered white clouds going a mile a minute. But they're gone. I feel as good as new.

HECTOR. That is very well. Now a walk in the open air, and I will hear what you would tell me about Mr. Bachelor and Miss Lamb.

HOWSON. Yes, I owe it to you, and—(*Truculently*)—it's coming to him!

(*Exeunt up left as enter up right SETH, catching sight of them. He beckons off and SAMPSON appears, wiping his fingers in his handkerchief as if he had just finished a sandwich.*)

SAMPSON. Much obliged for the snack, Seth. It was a life-saver!

SETH. Now's your time, sir. (*Indicating door L.2.*) I jest seen 'em go out.

SAMPSON. (*Hesitates, looking toward the door*) You could throw my duds into the bag in half the time I'd take to find things. Those two are apt to return, and I don't want another run-in with Howson.

SETH. All right, sir, only—don't let Miss Minervy ketch me. She's 'bout fit to be tied!

SAMPSON. I know. All right, I'll wait here and watch. She's out walking?

SETH. With your daughters. (*Goes hurriedly into the room, closing the door.*)

(SAMPSON seats himself wearily on the settee. He drops his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees. In a moment MINERVA, walking stiffly upright, enters up right, followed by POLLIE and MOLLIE. All wear black dresses as if in mourning. MOLLIE is rather subdued in manner while POLLIE is sily amused. SAMPSON is not aware of their presence.)

MINERVA. (*Seeing him, halts. Then points*) Look, my dears! (SAMPSON, with slight cry, springs up and runs, but brings up near the easy-chair and pulls himself together. MINERVA continues solemnly) There stands the person you once knew by the honored name of father.

MOLLIE. Yes, Auntie.

MINERVA. Look upon that moral ruin! (*Again pointing.*)

SAMPSON. (*Winces*) No need to point, Minerva. I'm the only ruin present.

MINERVA. Bid him a last farewell—to us henceforth he is dead!

SAMPSON. So you said! So you said! (*As MINERVA turns and sweeps upstairs, SAMPSON sighs and settles heavily into the easy-chair.*)

MOLLIE. (*A bit tearful*) Goo—Good-bye.

SAMPSON. Oh, good-bye! Goo—— (*Turning, struck by their sombre dresses.*) Say, why are you wearing mourning?

MOLLIE. We are mourning for our father.

SAMPSON. Well, I'll be damned!

POLLIE. Yes, auntie says you will.

MOLLIE. You are all that remains to remind us we once had a father.

SAMPSON. Oh, I'm the remains, am I? (*Folding his hands over his stomach and closing his eyes.*) Well, do I look—natural?

MOLLIE. We believe you've been more sinned against than sinning.

POLLIE. And we make every allowance for you. (*Winks at him.*)

SAMPSON. Thanks, daughter—but you're wrong! Alive or dead, I still make the *allowances*. However, you have my sympathy in your bereavement. (*Turns his back on them. MOLLIE, with downcast mien, is moving toward the stairs.*)

POLLIE. (*Impatiently*) Oh, snap out of it! Let's cut away and see what's doing down at the Camp.

MOLLIE. (*Instantly throwing off her doldrums*) All right! Come on! (*Giggling light-heartedly, they run off up left as SETH re-enters, carrying valise hurriedly stuffed with articles of apparel and more over his arm.*)

SAMPSON. Attaboy, Seth! (*Rising and crossing to settee.*) Dump everything right here.

SETH. (*Drops his burdens on settee, glancing nervously toward the entrances*) If Miss Minervy was to see me, by time I b'lieve she'd kill me!

SAMPSON. She would, Seth—she's just killed *me*! (*Starts packing the valise.*) Then she went up-stairs.

SETH. Oh! (*Relieved, glancing toward stairs.*)

SAMPSON. You slip away—I can manage now.

SETH. (*Moving to go*) When you're ready to

start, I'll see you down to the boat. (*Hurries off up right.*)

(SAMPSON bends industriously to the packing. Enter HECTOR up left, followed by HOWSON.)

HECTOR. (*Seeing SAMPSON, excitedly approaching*) Ha! You are found! (SAMPSON, startled, straightens up and looks at the two in mute appeal for peace.) Now I know you! (SAMPSON starts to continue his packing. HECTOR grabs his arm and jerks him to attention.) Ha! You have used me in a way most contemptible! (SAMPSON stands in patient misery, forced to listen.) You made her your cook, that you could dance her on your knee—with your lace nightrobe! And for this, you made me your catpaw, that you could hide your amour behind me! And, so it comes, I am this one you call the Potsy Balivare!

SAMPSON. (*In helpless protest*) No, you're wrong! You've got me wrong.

HECTOR. (*To HOWSON*) Is it not true?

HOWSON. Of course, it's true—every word! (*To SAMPSON, in gloating satisfaction*) He's got you dead to rights, and you know it!

SAMPSON. (*In sudden flash of spirit*) You're a liar! (*HOWSON laughs derisively. SAMPSON takes from his pocket the pink sheet and bends to pack it in the valise.*)

HOWSON. (*Leans over end of settee, in taunting manner*) I hear Minerva bawled you out, and gave you the rahoo——

SAMPSON. (*Straightens up, pointing the folded paper at him*) You keep away or I'll batter your phiz!

HOWSON. (*Seizing the paper*) Say, listen—— (*SAMPSON jerks away the paper, tearing it. Aggravated beyond endurance, he drops the paper to the*

*floor and lets drive at HOWSON's jaw. HOWSON side-steps and squares off to continue the mill.)*

HECTOR. (*To HOWSON, intervening*) No, I must interrupt your prize-fight! I come first before you. (*LETTIE enters rapidly up left. Seeing the attitudes of the group, she pauses in the doorway as HECTOR turns to SAMPSON.*) I demand of you satisfaction!

SAMPSON. How d'ye mean—satisfaction?

HECTOR. You shall shoot yourself with me!

SAMPSON. A duel? Ah, lay off! Dueling's out of date.

HECTOR. Ha! But my honor—that is not out of date! (*In peremptory manner*) Where shall we meet?

SAMPSON. Oh—in the back yard! (*With jerk of thumb over his shoulder.*) Midnight! (*Resumes packing.*)

HECTOR. (*To HOWSON*) You will be my second?

HOWSON. Sure I will! (*HECTOR bows and goes toward door L.2, bows in formal way to LETTIE and goes into room, closing the door. HOWSON, having caught sight of LETTIE, and, to impress her, turns with show of daring to SAMPSON.*) And now to settle my little account with you.

SAMPSON. (*Looks up at him in surprise which turns into irony*) Wha-at? Oh, don't tell me that your honor has been sprained!

HOWSON. You first sic'd that dog on me and then scared me into fits!

SAMPSON. Well, you got even—scaring the rest of us into convulsions! (*LETTIE moves across at back to center.*)

HOWSON. Also, your dog ruined a suit of my best clothes. (*Abruptly, with truculent swagger*) I demand satisfaction!

SAMPSON. (*Stares, then grins*) Oh, you mean damages. Well, come to the back yard, midnight,



and you'll get them! (SETH re-enters up right. SAMPSON, as if spoiling for a fight) Seth, my pistols! (SETH halts and stares, half-incredulous.)

HOWSON. (Startled, then to make good his bluff) I—ah—I'm willing to accept your apology!

SAMPSON. (Fiercely, with folded arms) Pistols!

(SETH, supposing SAMPSON to be in earnest, turns and goes off up right. HOWSON, under the same impression, puts on an air of bravado, bows to LETTIE and goes off up left.)

LETTIE. (Pretending to be impressed by SAMPSON'S display of valor, coming forward) Good for you, old scout! I didn't think you had it in you.

SAMPSON. (Grins, in the belief that she's jesting) Well, you thought right!

LETTIE. You're going to fight them, aren't you?

SAMPSON. Yes, I am—if they see me first! (Hurriedly resumes packing.) I'm going to beat it out of here as fast as I know how.

LETTIE. (Eyeing him gravely) M'm—and what about me?

SAMPSON. (Bothered by her manner) Why, I—I thought you were to meet me in Portland, and we'd decide what's best to be done.

LETTIE. Oh, that was before—something that's happened since. (In significant manner. SAMPSON looks puzzled.) I don't know what's best to be done—but I can come pretty near telling you what's the right thing to do!

SAMPSON. (Still at a loss) Well, tell me.

LETTIE. Do I have to tell you? Take a good look at the case just as it lays—and then at yourself. (With level look, holding his eyes.) Do you—get me?

SAMPSON. (After a pause, with sober nod of the head) I get you, Lettie.

LETTIE. Then you tell me!

SAMPSON. (*Quietly*) It won't do for me to run away, leaving these people thinking—what they must be thinking—about you and me.

LETTIE. Right! (*Smiles.*) Now—what are you going to do?

SAMPSON. (*After pause, with feeble smile*) I guess I've got to fight!

LETTIE. (*In casual manner, but eyeing him furtively*) You—don't object, do you?

SAMPSON. (*In hollow voice*) No—oh, no!

LETTIE. (*Eyeing him*) I never took you for one of those dynamite personalities, but I don't like to think you're altogether shy of backbone.

SAMPSON. (*Still in hollow voice*) Oh, no—not at all. (*Slight pause.*) There's just one slight difficulty.

LETTIE. A difficulty?

SAMPSON. This Frenchman may be a dead shot—and I couldn't hit a drove of cows.

LETTIE. (*Averts her face to hide a smile*) Oh, go and take a few pops at the target down in the bowling alley.

SAMPSON. Yes, that ought to help me—to hit the cows!

LETTIE. Hector Fournoy thinks that I'm just—! Well, you know what he thinks. You owe it to me to change his mind!

SAMPSON. It's got to be done. (*Pause. With heavy sigh*) Oh, well, I'm a dead one anyway. I might as well go the whole route.

LETTIE. Listen here, Sammy! There are two kinds of people in the world. One kind are doormats—and the other kind wipe their boots on them. To which class do you belong?

SAMPSON. (*Smiles, with shake of head*) I'm afraid I've been one of the mats.

LETTIE. Yes, and Minerva has been using you

for one! That's why she calls you a dead one. And she doesn't laugh when she says it. Well, the time has come for you to stand up in your boots and show her what's what!

SAMPSON. (*Looking very solemn*) Yep! I've got to make the grade.

SETH. (*Re-entering with a pair of old-time duelling pistols*) I had to burnish 'em up a little, sir. They was kind o' rusty. (*Handing them to SAMPSON, who turns up into window recess and stands looking off, a pistol in either hand hanging down at his side. SETH looks after him, then at LETTIE with grave misgivings.*)

LETTIE. Mr. Bachelor wants to practice a little at the target.

SETH. Excuse me, mum, but if you let him get mixed up in any shootin' match, it'll be his finish.

(*LETTIE looks toward SAMPSON, who is seen to sag at the knees and shoulders.*)

LETTIE. Oh, I don't know about that! But he'll need you to assist him—as his second! (*SETH stares aghast. LETTIE touches his arm and beckons him down extreme right out of SAMPSON'S hearing. Lowers her voice a trifle*) I noticed a call-bell in the bowling alley.

SETH. Yes, mum.

LETTIE. (*Confidentially*) Now, Seth, I want you to stand by that bell, and each time Mr. Bachelor shoots—you give that bell a ring!

SETH. (*His face clearing, grins assent*) Each time he shoots, I ring! And then he—— (*Suddenly sobers.*) They's one trouble, mum. The call-bell's only a few feet from the target, and—he's a villainous bad shot!

LETTIE. You'll load the pistols, won't you?

SETH. Yes, mum.

LETTIE. Just load all the chambers with *blank cartridges!*

SETH. (*Again on a broad grin*) I've got plenty blanks downstairs.

LETTIE. But *don't* let him suspect! (*Handing a bill.*)

SETH. Thank ye, mum. Trust me, they'll be no slip. (*Exit up right.*)

(SAMPSON now sinks to a sitting posture on the window-seat, his head drooping, the pistols hanging between his knees. LETTIE moves up to speak to him.)

MINERVA. (*Heard off upstairs, calling*) Mollie! Pollie! Are you there? (LETTIE glances up the stairs, then hurries into her room. Same time COMFORT enters up left, carrying a waste-paper basket half filled with scraps. Setting it down, she takes SAMPSON'S valise from the settee and stands it at the wall left. Then, picking up from the floor the torn pink sheet, she is about to throw it into the basket, but checks herself, folds and slips it into the bosom of her dress, then takes up her basket. Same moment MINERVA appears coming down the stairs.) Is that you, Comfort? Where are those two girls? I want them to—— (*Startled at sight of SAMPSON with the pistols.*) Sampson Bachelor! (SAMPSON raises his head and looks at her with heavy, brooding eyes.) What are you going to do—with those pistols? (COMFORT stands glued to the spot, gazing at SAMPSON.)

SAMPSON. (*Looks at the pistols. Then he rises and comes forward between the two women, halts and looks fixedly at MINERVA*) What are you wearing mourning for?

MINERVA. (*Disconcerted*) Why—er—I—I've told you.

SAMPSON. Yes, it was put on in sardonic mockery! Well, it is now quite fitting to the occasion. (*Looks meaningly at the pistols.*)

MINERVA. (*In alarm*) Sampson! What are you going to do?

SAMPSON. Can you not guess? (*In tragic manner folding his arms, the pistol in either hand inadvertently pointed at MINERVA and COMFORT, who dodge out of range.*)

MINERVA. Sampson! You can't—you must not do this terrible thing!

SAMPSON. Honor is more to me than life!

MINERVA. Your life is not yours to throw away like this. It belongs to your daughters—to your family. Your life belongs to *us*!

SAMPSON. Well, you've taken it lightly enough. Allow me the same privilege. So long. I must go to my appointment. (*Turning to go.*)

MINERVA. (*With something of her old authority*) Sampson! Where are you going?

SAMPSON. Me? I'm going to join Bulger! (*Stalks off augustly up right, swinging the pistols.*)

MINERVA. Sampson! Brother! Come back! Come—— (*Following to the doorway, halts. Then turning down left in despair.*) Oh! Oh, if he kills himself, the disgrace will be greater than I can bear! (*Abruptly turns to COMFORT.*) Where is that woman—er—Miss Lamb? (*Pointing to LETTIE'S door. COMFORT runs and knocks. LETTIE, who evidently has witnessed the foregoing scene through her door held slightly ajar, now enters biting her lips to conceal her amusement. MINERVA running to meet her.*) Save him—my brother! I'm afraid he'll shoot himself!

LETTIE. (*In feigned alarm*) Heavens!

COMFORT. (*Agitated*) He's got two pistols!

LETTIE. Are they loaded?

COMFORT. Must be—he's a-goin' to j'ine Bulger!

MINERVA. Save his life! And I'll reward you—anything you ask!

LETTIE. Anything I ask! Is that a promise?

MINERVA. My solemn promise!

LETTIE. All right! It's a bargain!

MINERVA. You'll save his life?

LETTIE. I'll do it. I may have to struggle with him—but I'll turn him from his deadly purpose!

MINERVA. (*Relieved*) Bless you! But hurry!

LETTIE. Go upstairs and leave it all in my hands!

MINERVA. Yes, I will! I will! (*Going toward the stairs.*)

COMFORT. (*To LETTIE*) Can I do anything?

LETTIE. No, leave me! (*Waving her off.*) I must think! Think!

MINERVA. (*Pausing on the stairs*) Why don't you hurry? You'll be too late!

LETTIE. Don't question me! This is a tough job you've given me. Leave me to figure it out! Go! (*Waving them off with both hands. Exit MINERVA hurriedly up the stairs as COMFORT with her basket runs off up right. LETTIE, looking after them, shakes with half-suppressed laughter, goes and drops into the easy-chair. She sobers as HECTOR enters room L.2 and walks with head bent in thought. Seeing LETTIE, he stops and looks at her in deep reproach. LETTIE nods to him.*) How do you do, Ah-so?

HECTOR. Thank you, I am quite well—in spite of how you have treated me.

LETTIE. (*In reproach*) Oh, dear me! Is this how you speak of the tender regard I've always felt for you?

HECTOR. Oh, this tender regard! What would your husband say to this?

(*Enter HOWSON up left, pausing as LETTIE speaks.*)



LETTIE. My husband? Ah, it's very sad.

HECTOR. Sad?

LETTIE. (*In feigned surprise*) Haven't you heard? My husband—is *dead*.

HECTOR. (*Surprised*) Dead?

HOWSON. Dead! (*Frankly pleased by the news, approaching.*)

HECTOR. Mr. Bachelor then was lying when he said you have a husband?

LETTIE. He didn't know then—that *he was dead*.

HECTOR. A most elusive person was this husband. But I give you my sympathy.

LETTIE. Thank you. (*HECTOR bows and goes into room L.2.*)

HOWSON. (*Approaches, smiling*) You know, I'm awfully sorry for your bereavement.

LETTIE. You are so kind. (*Dutifully finding her handkerchief.*)

HOWSON. I say, you will look snappy in widow's weeds!

LETTIE. Ye-m? (*Glances at him from behind her handkerchief.*)

HOWSON. But why spoil your beauty grieving? (*LETTIE covers her face, shaken by what is meant for sobs.*) I've an idea. Let's slip away from here, you and I, and try it together for a bit. What d'ye say?

LETTIE. (*Looks up at him*) You do have such bright ideas!

HOWSON. By Jove, I can't deny it—I really do. (*Approaches, bending toward her.*) Then it's all settled—we fly from here together, eh?

(*HECTOR re-enters in restless manner, going toward doorway up left.*)

LETTIE. Well, if you survive the duel, I——

HOWSON. (*Startled*) Sur—Survive the——?

(HECTOR *halts, then approaches a step or two, listening in surprise.*) Oh-ho? I should worry! Why, Seth tells me Bachelor couldn't hit the side of a haystack!

HECTOR. (*Approaching*) What is this? I am to meet Mr. Bachelor—not you!

HOWSON. Oh, you leave him to me! As Miss Lamb's protector—he *belongs to me!* (*Noting the effect on LETTIE, who pretends to be impressed.*)

HECTOR. You forget! I am the principal—you my second!

HOWSON. Second—me? No, sir, I'm *first!* You can have what's left of him after I get through! (*Doing a swashbuckler strut.*)

HECTOR. Mr. Bachelor himself shall decide which of us he will meet first. (*To LETTIE*) Where is this valiant Bachelor?

LETTIE. (*Innocently*) Why, I believe he went to practice at a target.

HECTOR and HOWSON. (*Surprised*) Target? Practice? (*Pistol report heard off. HECTOR laughs.*)

HOWSON. (*Laughingly*) He'll need a lot of practice! Seth tells me he couldn't hit the side of a— (*Pistol report again followed by short ring of bell. Both men stand transfixed by surprise.*)

LETTIE. What does it matter which one meets him first—you're both so brave! I love brave men! And if you fall, I will come and put fresh flowers on your graves. (*Both men shiver, making wry faces. LETTIE slips away by doorway up right.*)

HOWSON. If we fall—she will come and— (*His legs begin to quake and he gets to the settee, sits and tries to speak in casual manner*) Say—did you notice that was a—a bull's eye?

HECTOR. (*Badly rattled, but controlling himself, sits in the easy-chair*) Oh—by accident he may the first time—

HOWSON. But that *kind* of accident first thing

when I—we—you face him—! (*Pistol report followed by bell. Both men bound to their feet. HECTOR sits immediately. HOWSON tries to run, but his legs give way and he grabs at the arm of settee, into which he collapses, taking breath with short moans.*) Oh! Oh! Don't tell me that was accident! Don't tell me——

HECTOR. He—he is a good shot! (*With shaking hand lights cigarette, which quivers in his lips as he smokes.*)

HOWSON. He's a damn good shot! And Seth told me—he couldn't hit the side of a haystack! Oh! Oh! (*Wipes his perspiring face.*) They must have steam heat in this room! (*Pistol report. Bell is tardy.*)

HOWSON and HECTOR. (*With intense relief, rising*) Missed! (*Bell is heard. Both collapse.*)

HOWSON. (*After a moaning breath or two*) What gravels me is that damn Seth—sayin' he couldn't hit——

HECTOR. (*Indignant*) He is a crack shot! What need for him to practice?

HOWSON. (*Leaps to his feet*) That's right! This is nothing short of murder! What chance have we—I mean, you got, having to face him first?

HECTOR. (*Rising*) Oh, no—you!

HOWSON. (*In amused surprise*) Me? Don't make me laugh! (*Laughs a hollow, wooden laugh.*)

HECTOR. (*Firmly*) You said he belongs to you! You would be first to protect Lettie Lamb!

HOWSON. Lettie Lamb is nothing to me—never heard of her until today! You were engaged to marry her. Oh, no, old dear, you can't pass that buck to me!

HECTOR. (*Suddenly*) But she's now a widow—and you can marry her!

HOWSON. (*Trying to laugh*) No, she's all yours! You won her fairly! There was no cheating!

*(Pistol report and bell. HOWSON drops into seat and begins to quake again.)*

HECTOR. *(Mournfully, sitting)* She will put flowers on my grave! *(Pistol report and bell. Howson yells and springs up, his shaking legs give way and he drops back into seat, taking his breath in short moans.)* We must go like lambs to the slaughter.

HOWSON. Not for mine! *(Finding relief and steadier nerves in the determination to run away.)* I'm off!

HECTOR. *(In surprise, rising)* You—you are going to run away?

HOWSON. Run away? Me? No, sir, I'm going to take French leave. *(Moving to go.)*

HECTOR. You cannot do this! Your honor!

HOWSON. My what? Ha, ha! Honor's a fine thing—so's a whole skin! *(Turning to go.)*

HECTOR. *(In scorn)* You have the white liver—the yellow streak!

HOWSON. I don't care a hoot! And you're a boob to meet him. Come away!

HECTOR. I must meet him!

HOWSON. Oh, you've got a star chance! You'll be knocked cuckoo! *(Pistol report and bell. Howson begins to quake, his legs give way and he is falling.)*

HECTOR. *(Supports him)* You will at least act for me as my second?

HOWSON. *(Hysterically)* I've an engagement—*(His shaking hand baffles his attempt to consult wrist-watch.)* You can carry on alone—*(Wrenching free as LETTIE re-enters up right, in which direction HOWSON was moving.)*

LETTIE. Gentlemen, Mr. Bachelor will meet you—in the backyard! *(Pointing up right.)*

(HOWSON turns and is making for doorway up left as fast as his unstable legs will carry him. Pistol report and bell. HOWSON crumples and falls. A succession of three or four pistol reports and bells, during which HOWSON, scrambling to his feet and falling, manages to crawl off up left. Then HECTOR drops into settee, suddenly keels over, half-dazed, and lies at full length, his legs overhanging. MOLLIE and POLLIE enter up left, running.)

MOLLIE. All this shooting! Hector! Are you hurt? (*Bending over him. POLLIE lifts his foot.*)

HECTOR. (*Murmuring*) Flowers on my grave. (*POLLIE drops his foot.*)

MINERVA. (*Comes down stairs, her hands clasped in manner of one bereaved*) Well, he's at rest. But it took a lot of shooting.

LETTIE. I had an awful struggle with him!

MINERVA. But you couldn't save him.

LETTIE. Oh, but I did!

MINERVA. He isn't—dead?

MOLLIE and POLLIE. Dead!

LETTIE. The truth is, he's been *dead* for a long time, but he's very much alive now. Wait till you see him. (*Runs off up left as SETH enters up right, supporting HOWSON, who is "all in."*)

POLLIE. Oh, my! Is he shot?

SETH. No, Miss.

POLLIE. He looks—half-shot!

(SETH puts HOWSON in the easy-chair, where he gradually revives. SETH goes off up right. HECTOR, during this, comes to and sits up, MOLLIE sitting beside him. COMFORT has come rushing on up right, the pink sheet in her hand.)

COMFORT. (*Excitedly*) Oh, Miss Minerva, look

what I just read in this newspaper. (*Handing it, pointing to the article.*)

MINERVA. (*Seizes and eagerly reads*) "Lettie Lamb deserts the stage to marry well-known club-man." M-m-m-m—— (*Hurriedly scanning the article.*) ——"to Sampson Bachelor"! (*Looks up in astonishment.*) Why—they were married this morning!

OMNES. Married!

(*HECTOR and MOLLIE rise. HOWSON sits up and takes notice. Enter up left SAMPSON, arm in arm with LETTIE, a pistol in his hand.*)

MINERVA. (*Meeting them*) Sampson? Brother!

SAMPSON. (*Manfully, a note of defiance in his voice*) Minerva, this lady is Mrs. Sampson Bachelor.

MINERVA. I'm very happy to meet you, my dear. (*Taking LETTIE's hand and kissing her.*)

POLLIE. (*Excitedly*) Say, Mollie! We've got a new mamma, and she's the best ever!

(*As MOLLIE comes running to embrace and kiss LETTIE. HECTOR follows MOLLIE. Same time LINDA, MAUD and BESSIE enter up left. POLLIE runs, meets, explains in dumb-show as she brings them forward, and all gather about LETTIE, showering her with felicitations. HOWSON, during this, leaves the easy-chair and comes face to face with SAMPSON. The two eye one another.*)

HOWSON. I say, Bachelor, when did you learn to shoot?

SAMPSON. Me? Why, it was born in me!

(*Vauntingly waving his pistol, accidentally discharg-*



*ing it. Ring of bell heard off. HECTOR and HOW-  
SON stare at SAMPSON. Then the three laugh heart-  
ily as*

CURTAIN

## ACT I

### PROPERTIES ON SCENE

Upholstered settee, on which are two (2) sofa cushions.

Upholstered easy-chair.

Square table of medium size with neat cover.

Three (3) occasional chairs set about this table.

Smaller table or stand at wall, on which a tray of dishes may be set.

Fireplace of brick with accessories, andirons, fender, etc.; no fire.

Mantel on fireplace. On mantel shelf a bronze clock and a pair of vases.

Wall-pocket hung within good view of spectator.

Cushioned window-seat.

Two (2) fowling pieces, and a game bag.

Two (2) old boat oars. Rods and fishing tackle.

Other implements of sport, and articles of furniture at discretion.

Portieres for doorways up right and up left and for window recess, to harmonize with color scheme.

Chandelier or large ceiling lamp.

Single staircase as described.

Strip of stair carpet, negative shade.

A Navajo blanket thrown across the stair-rail.

Large rug in negative shades.

### PROPERTIES OFF SCENE

At doorway up left:

For Lettie: A bunch of roses. A trunk key for her trunk.

For Sampson: Large valise containing articles of apparel, and a large photograph, supposedly a likeness of Lettie. A pink newspaper, having one loose page to be slipped out.

For Seth: A smaller valise (not new). Two (2) small trunks, the first showing evidence of much travel, plastered with hotel porters' labels, etc. This trunk contains an assortment of woman's apparel, a hat, dresses, lingerie, and the following articles employed in the action: a lace-trimmed nightgown; a book, 12 mo.; and two (2) large dolls in fancy dresses. Three (3) valises of various sizes.

For Mollie: A handbag, containing a pack of cigarettes, opened; and a packet of safety matches, or matches in a case.

At door L.2:

For Comfort: A pint wine bottle, no label, containing a liquor to represent red wine, must be potable.

For Sampson: A similar bottle, empty.

At door R.2:

For Lettie: A cabinet photograph of two (2) small girls. Bungalow apron.

At doorway up right:

For Comfort: A tray containing table cloth, two (2) napkins, and dishes for luncheon for two persons, cups, saucers, plates. Same tray containing two (2) knives, two (2) forks, two (2) spoons, cruets and sugar bowl. A small tray containing teapot, cup and saucer.

For Lettie: A bungalow apron with pockets; a plate containing a half dozen doughnuts.

### EFFECTS

Honking of motor horn at rise of curtain.

Barking and growling of large dog at cues.

Ringling of electric doorbell at cues.

## LIGHTING

Lights on window and in all entrances to simulate daylight. No change.

## ACT II

## PROPERTIES ON SCENE

No change, save that the table is cleared and is spread with its usual **cover**.

## PROPERTIES OFF SCENE

At doorway up left:

For Comfort: A tray filled with an assortment of used dishes as from the garden party's luncheon.

For Lettie: A tray similarly piled with used dishes. This same tray ready at a later cue.

For Linda: A tennis racquet. A golf club.

For Maud and Bessie: A tennis racquet for each.

For Pollie: An opened pack or case of cigarettes. Packet of safety matches or in metal case.

At door L.2:

For Sampson: His traveling suit and traveling cap.

For Hector: An empty gallon demijohn.

For Howson: Folded page of the pink newspaper in pocket of the suit into which he changes.

At doorway up right:

For Lettie: An empty tray for dishes.

For Comfort: The bungalow apron with Lettie's bracelets in a pocket.

For Seth: A physician's medicine case.

EFFECTS OFF STAGE

Scream of a frightened girl. Cries of several women under excitement.

Snarling and growling as of savage dog approaching.

Report of revolver heard in distance.

LIGHTING

The same as for Act I.

ACT III

PROPERTIES ON SCENE

No change, save that Lettie's dolls are removed from the easy-chair.

PROPERTIES OFF SCENE

At doorway up left:

For Comfort: A waste basket partly filled with paper scraps.

For Sampson: One of the dueling pistols loaded with short-force blank cartridges to be discharged once on scene.

For Lettie: Money, a few bills, in purse or small handbag.

At door L.2:

For Seth: Sampson's large valise, carried open as if hurriedly stuffed with shirts, collars, underwear, etc. A coat and pair of trousers.

At doorway up right:

For Seth: A pair of old-time dueling pistols.

## EFFECTS

About a dozen reports of revolver at cues; each report to be followed, as directed in text, by short ring of gong struck by muffled hammer in rough imitation of a target bell, but loud enough to be distinctly heard throughout auditorium. Note: This effect should be carefully rehearsed. Short-force blank cartridges only should be used.

## LIGHTING

Chandelier or large ceiling lamp lighted. Scene lights on full, except on window, where, from rise of curtain, lights are gradually dimmed to give the effect of dusk deepening to darkness. At the cue: "Is that you, Comfort?" effect of darkness stands for balance of the act.

NOTE: Amateurs may dispense with chandelier or ceiling lamp at discretion.









